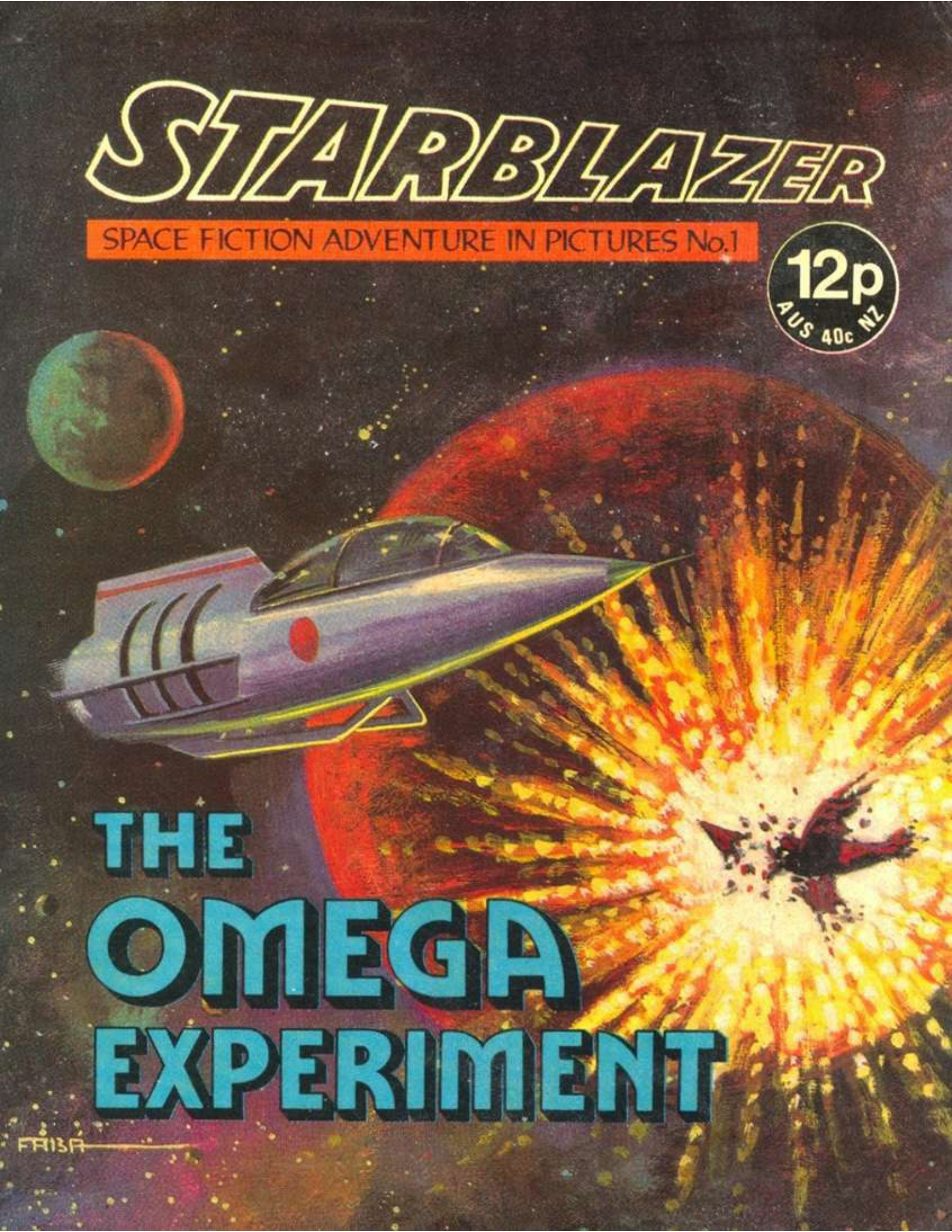
STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No.1

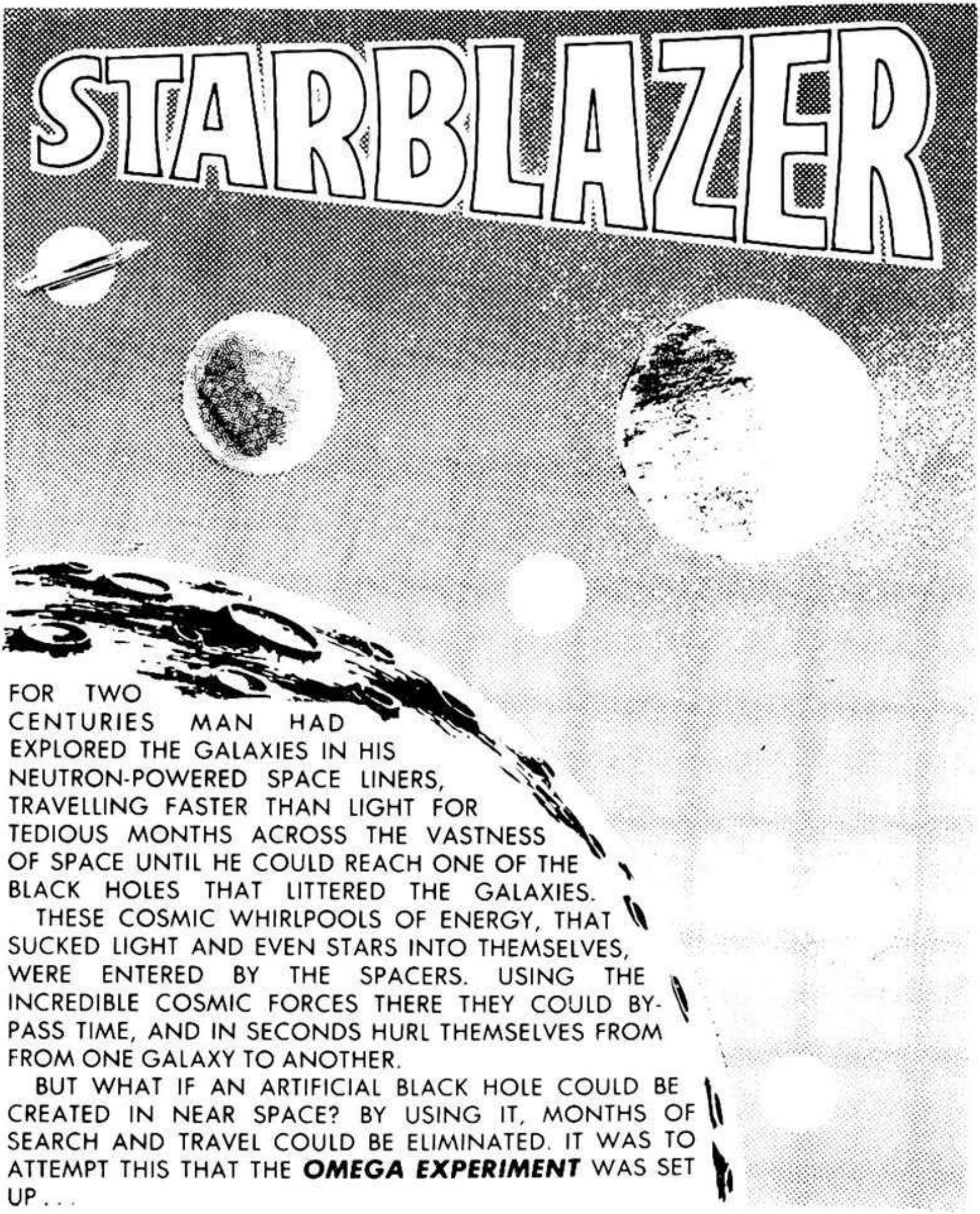
12p
AUS 40c NZ



THE OMEGA EXPERIMENT

FRISA

STARBLAZER



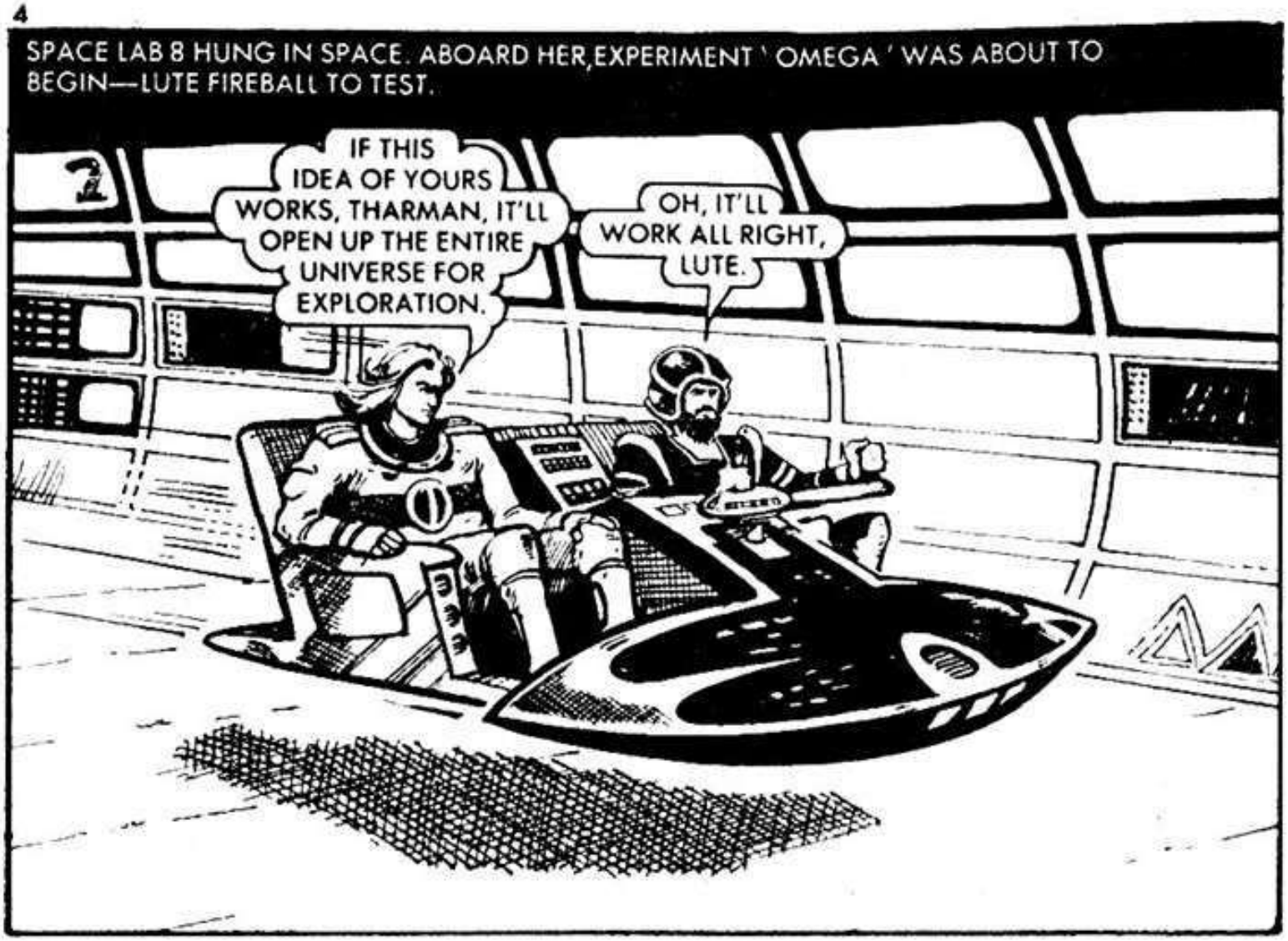
FOR TWO CENTURIES MAN HAD EXPLORED THE GALAXIES IN HIS NEUTRON-POWERED SPACE LINERS, TRAVELLING FASTER THAN LIGHT FOR TEDIOUS MONTHS ACROSS THE VASTNESS OF SPACE UNTIL HE COULD REACH ONE OF THE BLACK HOLES THAT LITTERED THE GALAXIES.

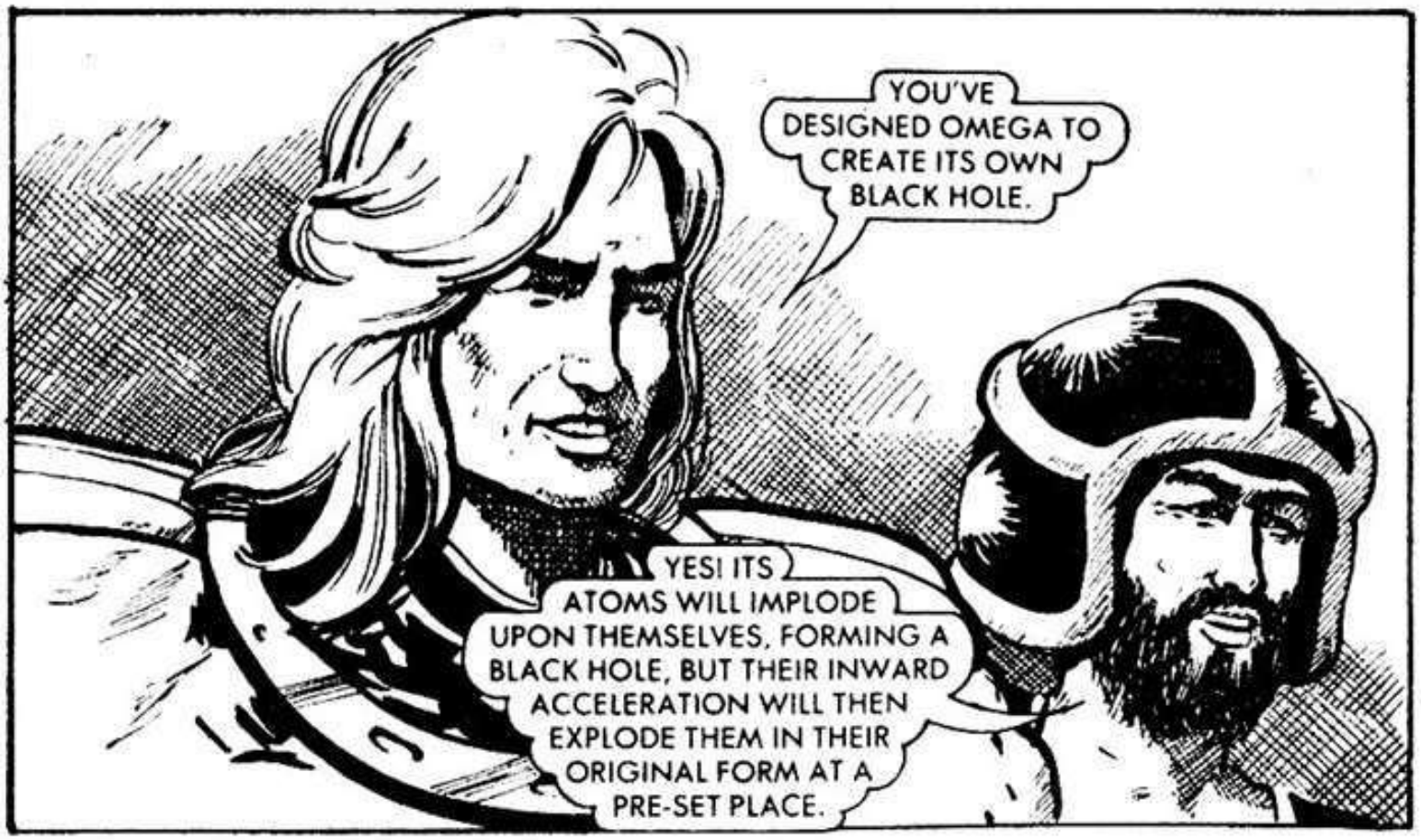
THESE COSMIC WHIRLPOOLS OF ENERGY, THAT SUCKED LIGHT AND EVEN STARS INTO THEMSELVES, WERE ENTERED BY THE SPACERS. USING THE INCREDIBLE COSMIC FORCES THERE THEY COULD BY-PASS TIME, AND IN SECONDS HURL THEMSELVES FROM FROM ONE GALAXY TO ANOTHER.

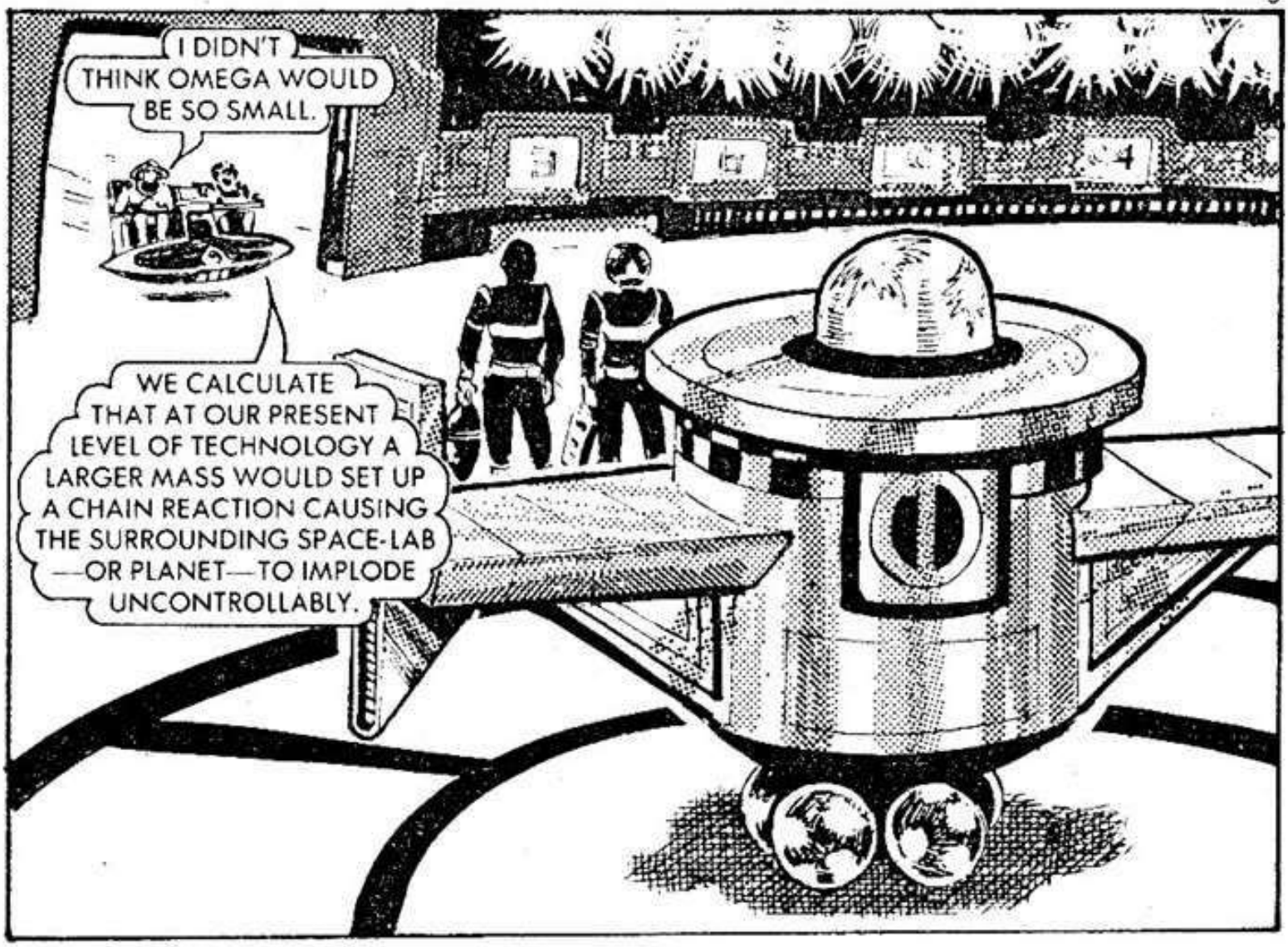
BUT WHAT IF AN ARTIFICIAL BLACK HOLE COULD BE CREATED IN NEAR SPACE? BY USING IT, MONTHS OF SEARCH AND TRAVEL COULD BE ELIMINATED. IT WAS TO ATTEMPT THIS THAT THE ***OMEGA EXPERIMENT*** WAS SET UP . . .

THE OMEGA EXPERIMENT

—only Lute Fireball was daring enough to attempt this wild leap across the universe!

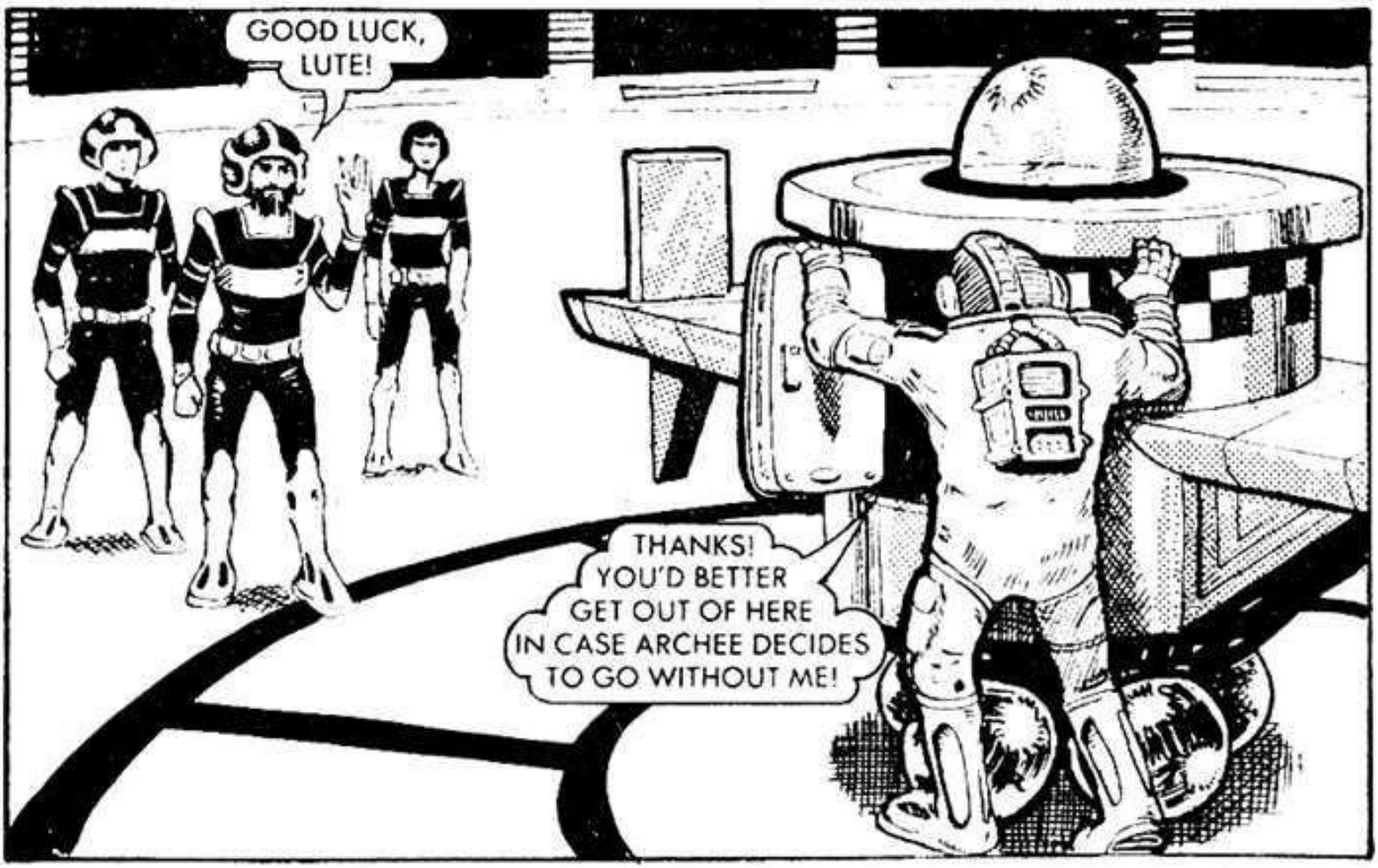

SPACE LAB 8 HUNG IN SPACE. ABOARD HER, EXPERIMENT ' OMEGA ' WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN—LUTE FIREBALL TO TEST.
IF THIS IDEA OF YOURS WORKS, THARMAN, IT'LL OPEN UP THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE FOR EXPLORATION.
OH, IT'LL WORK ALL RIGHT, LUTE.

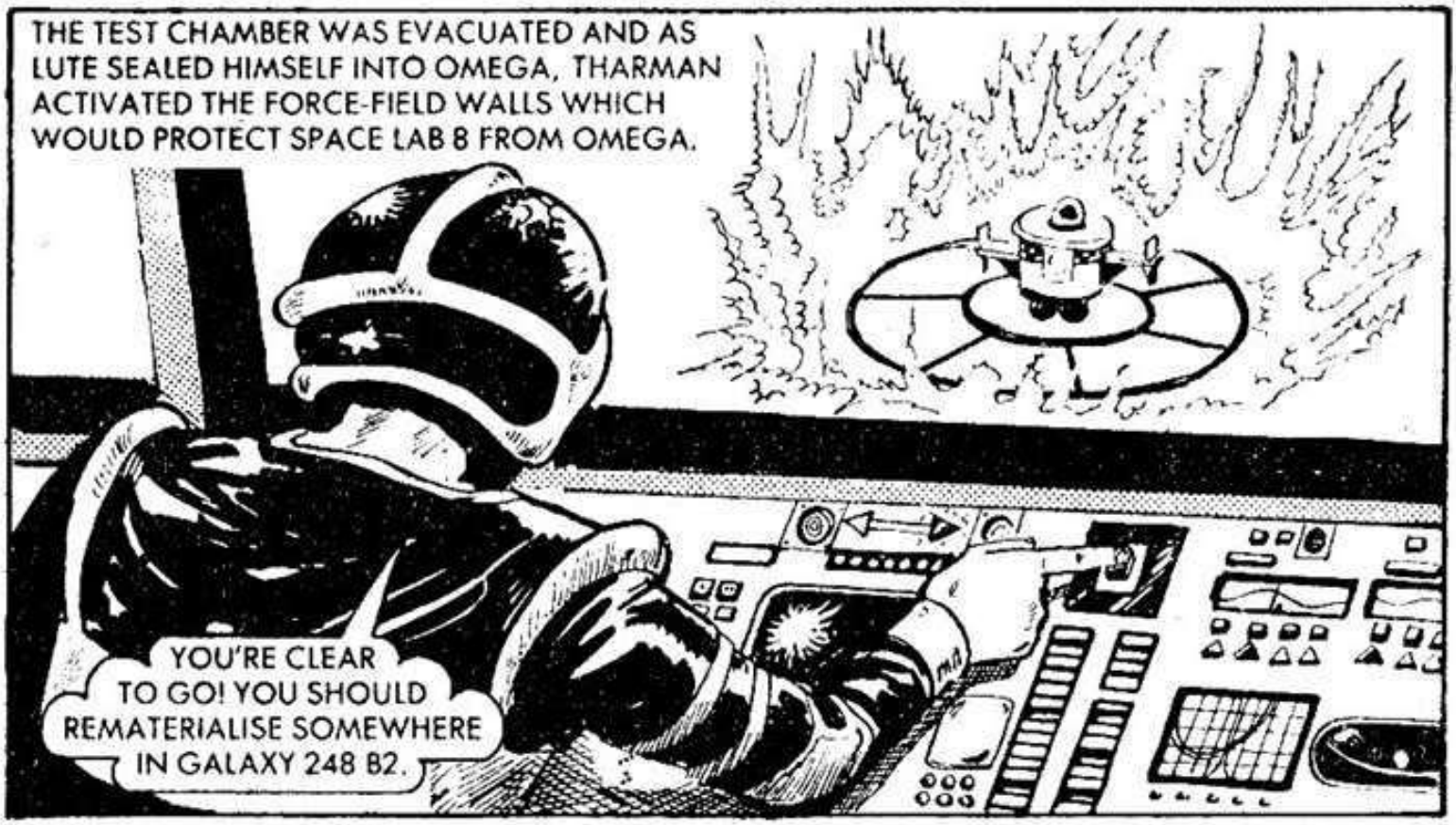

YOU'VE DESIGNED OMEGA TO CREATE ITS OWN BLACK HOLE.
YES! ITS ATOMS WILL IMPLODE UPON THEMSELVES, FORMING A BLACK HOLE, BUT THEIR INWARD ACCELERATION WILL THEN EXPLODE THEM IN THEIR ORIGINAL FORM AT A PRE-SET PLACE.


I DIDN'T THINK OMEGA WOULD BE SO SMALL.
WE CALCULATE THAT AT OUR PRESENT LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGY A LARGER MASS WOULD SET UP A CHAIN REACTION CAUSING THE SURROUNDING SPACE-LAB —OR PLANET— TO IMPLODE UNCONTROLLABLY.

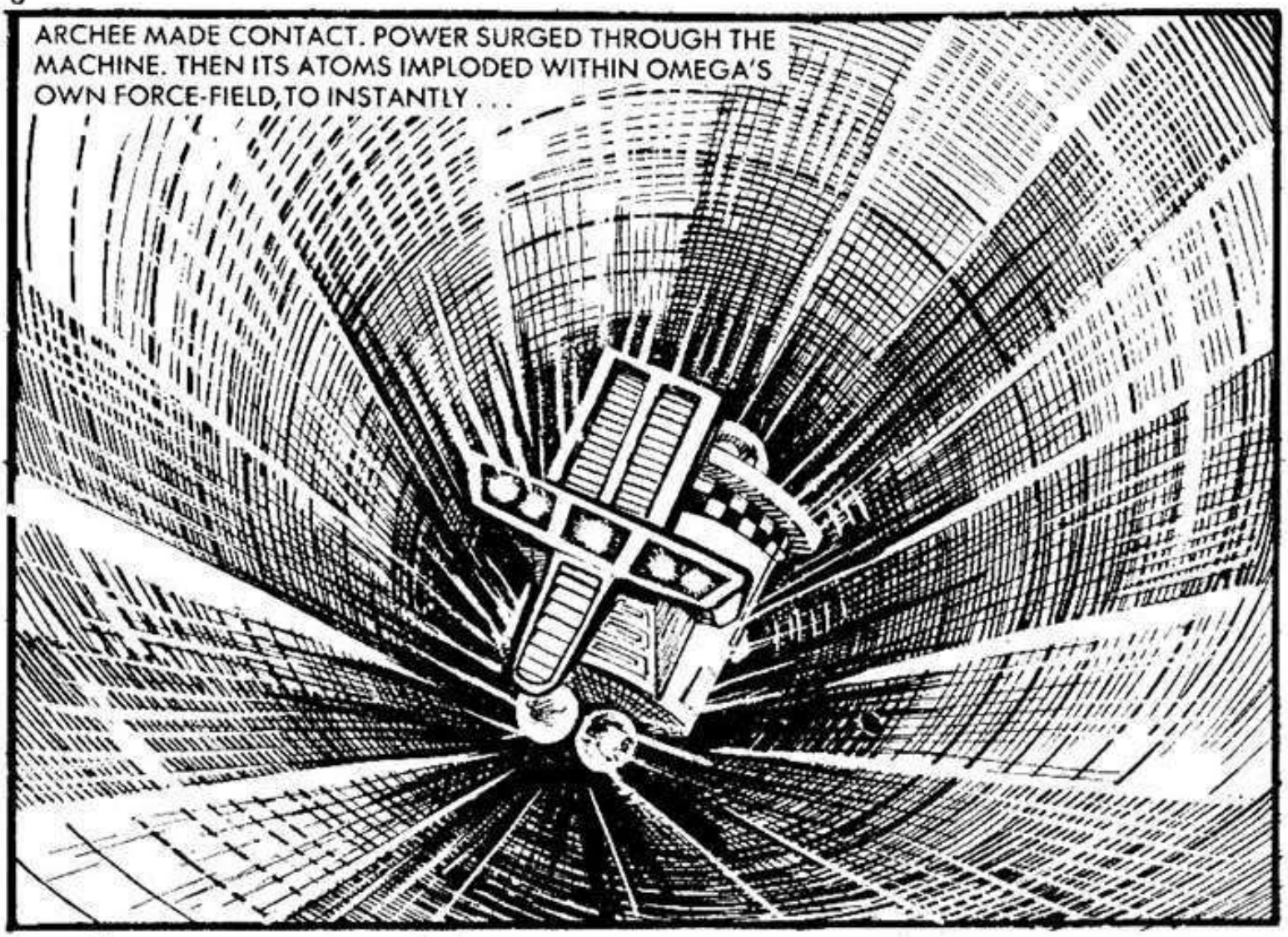
IF YOU HAVE A MALFUNCTION, LUTE, YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT ABOUT FOUR WEEKS BEFORE WE CAN RESCUE YOU.
AND THIS IS ARCHEE. HE'S THE BEST FRIEND ANY SPACER COULD HAVE.

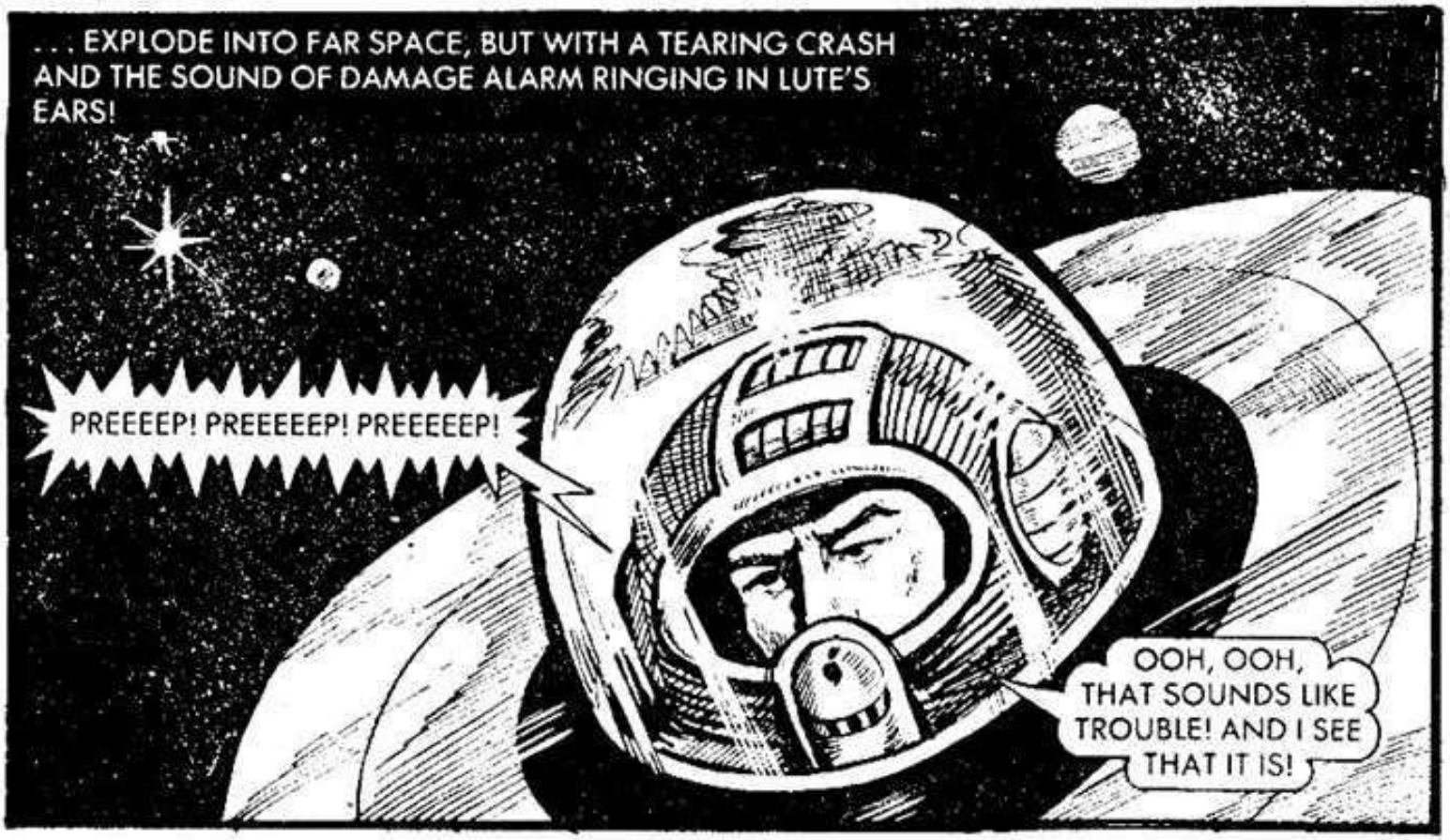
HE'S YOUR COMPUTER, AUTO-PILOT AND HYPER-TIME MAYDAY BEACON.
HELLO, ARCHEE. READY FOR TAKE-OFF?
AS SOON AS I AM SLOTTED INTO THE CONTROL CONSOLE AND YOU HAVE FITTED YOUR HELMET AND OXYPACK.

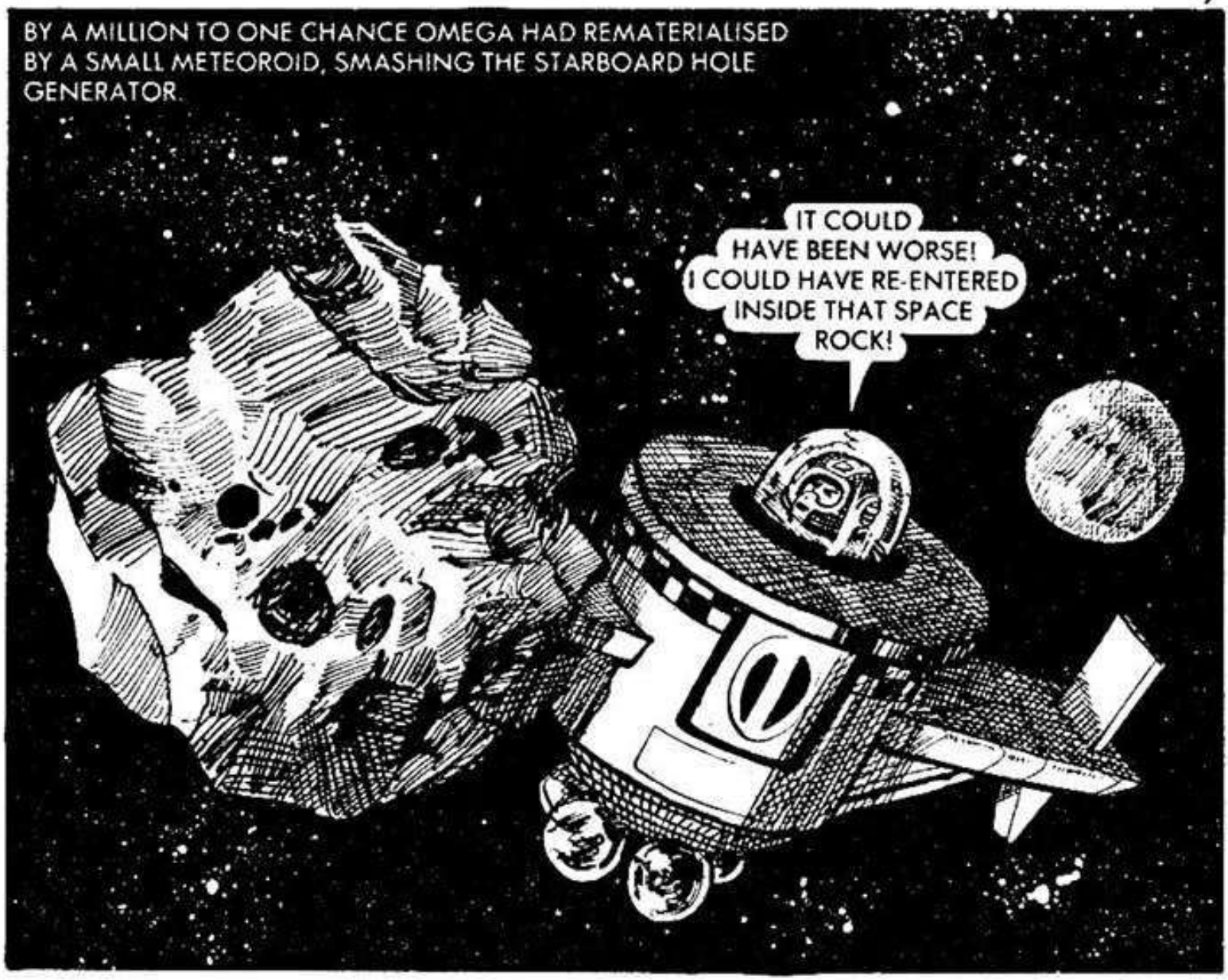

GOOD LUCK, LUTE!
THANKS! YOU'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE IN CASE ARCHEE DECIDES TO GO WITHOUT ME!


THE TEST CHAMBER WAS EVACUATED AND AS LUTE SEALED HIMSELF INTO OMEGA, THARMAN ACTIVATED THE FORCE-FIELD WALLS WHICH WOULD PROTECT SPACE LAB 8 FROM OMEGA.
YOU'RE CLEAR TO GO! YOU SHOULD REMATERIALISE SOMEWHERE IN GALAXY 248 B2.

ALL AROUND OMEGA THE AIR BOILED WITH ENERGY AS THE FORCE-FIELD PREPARED TO RESIST THE SHOCK OF LUTE'S DEPARTURE.
OK, ARCHEE! LET'S GO!

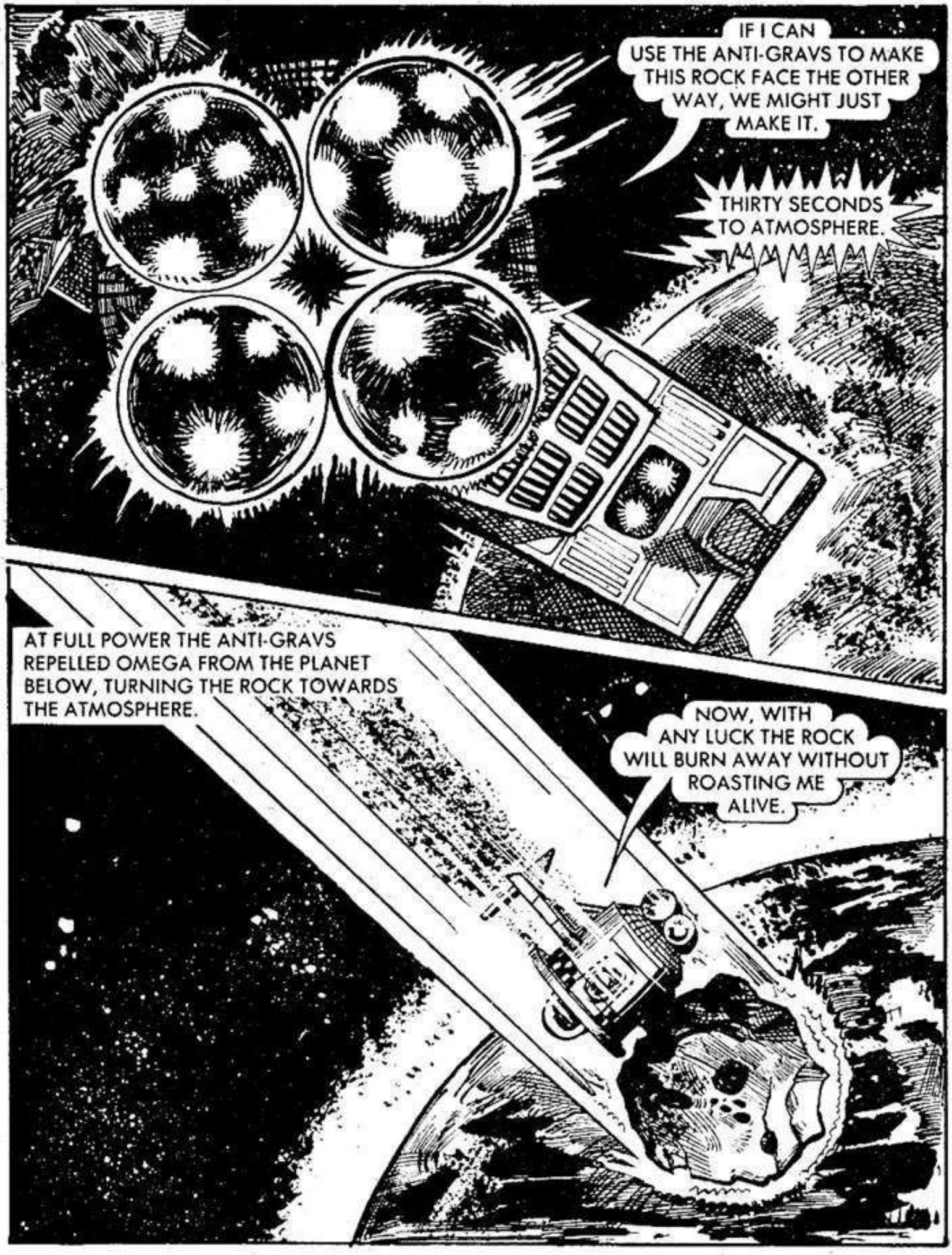

ARCHEE MADE CONTACT. POWER SURGED THROUGH THE MACHINE. THEN ITS ATOMS IMPLODED WITHIN OMEGA'S OWN FORCE-FIELD, TO INSTANTLY . . .

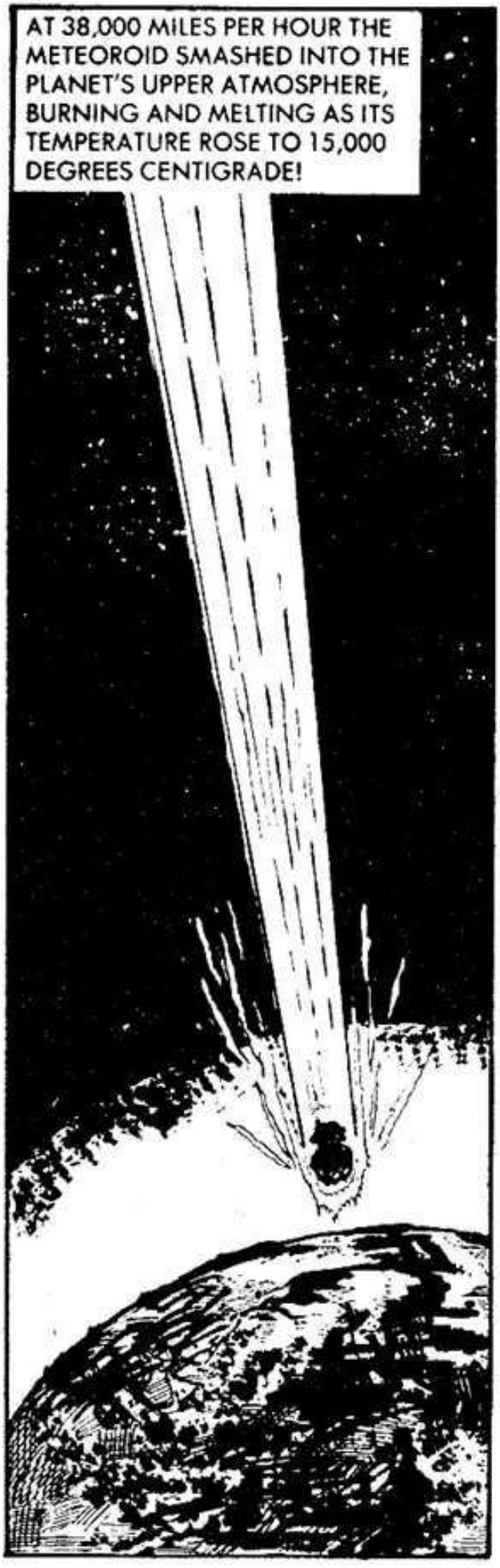

. . . EXPLODE INTO FAR SPACE, BUT WITH A TEARING CRASH AND THE SOUND OF DAMAGE ALARM RINGING IN LUTE'S EARS!
PREEEEP! PREEEEEP! PREEEEEP!
OOH, OOH, THAT SOUNDS LIKE TROUBLE! AND I SEE THAT IT IS!


BY A MILLION TO ONE CHANCE OMEGA HAD REMATERIALISED BY A SMALL METEOROID, SMASHING THE STARBOARD HOLE GENERATOR.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE! I COULD HAVE RE-ENTERED INSIDE THAT SPACE ROCK!

DAMAGE REPORT. HOW BAD IS IT, ARCHEE?
RETURN HOME NOT POSSIBLE—MY SENSORS INDICATE THAT WE ARE BEING DRAWN TOWARDS AN EARTH-SIZE PLANETARY BODY.
POWER LOSS 50%
ANTI-GRAVITY MOTORS A.OK.
LIFE SUPPORT A.OK.

LOCKED FAST TO THE METEOROID, LUTE RACED ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH A NEARBY PLANET . . .
I'M GOING TO FRY WHEN WE HIT THE ATMOSPHERE IF I CAN'T SLOW THIS CRATE DOWN!
WE WILL ENTER ATMOSPHERE IN THREE POINT TWO ZERO MINUTES.
THE ANTI-GRAVITY MOTORS ARE OK, BUT THE EXTRA MASS OF THIS ROCK I'M GLUED TO MAKES THEM USELESS. WHAT CAN I DO, ARCHEE?
THE OVERALL MASS MUST BE REDUCED BY 78·12% BEFORE THE ANTI-GRAVITY MOTORS WILL BE EFFECTIVE.

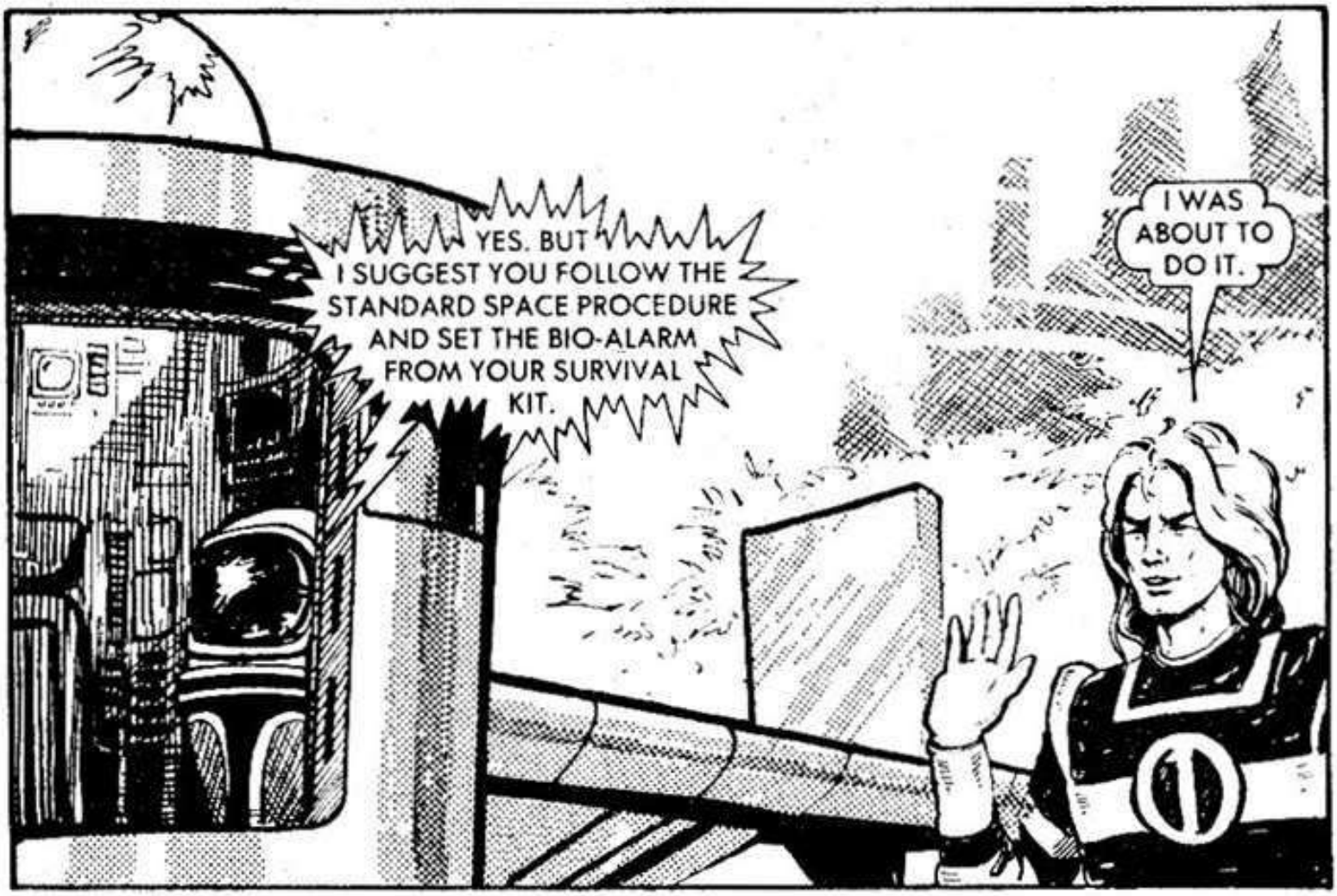

IF I CAN USE THE ANTI-GRAVS TO MAKE THIS ROCK FACE THE OTHER WAY, WE MIGHT JUST MAKE IT.
THIRTY SECONDS TO ATMOSPHERE.
AT FULL POWER THE ANTI-GRAVS REPELLED OMEGA FROM THE PLANET BELOW, TURNING THE ROCK TOWARDS THE ATMOSPHERE.
NOW, WITH ANY LUCK THE ROCK WILL BURN AWAY WITHOUT ROASTING ME ALIVE.

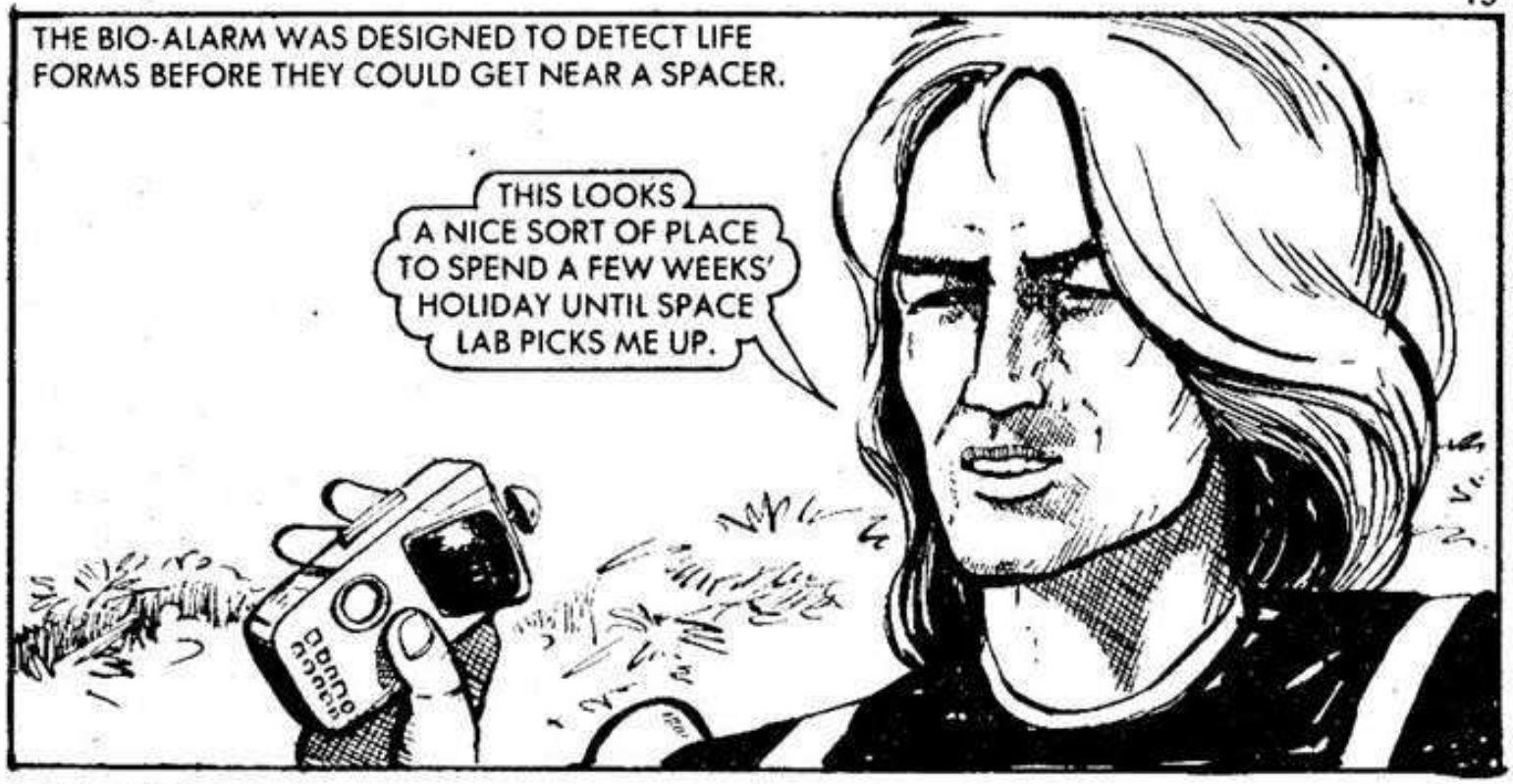

AT 38,000 MILES PER HOUR THE METEOROID SMASHED INTO THE PLANET'S UPPER ATMOSPHERE, BURNING AND MELTING AS ITS TEMPERATURE ROSE TO 15,000 DEGREES CENTIGRADE!

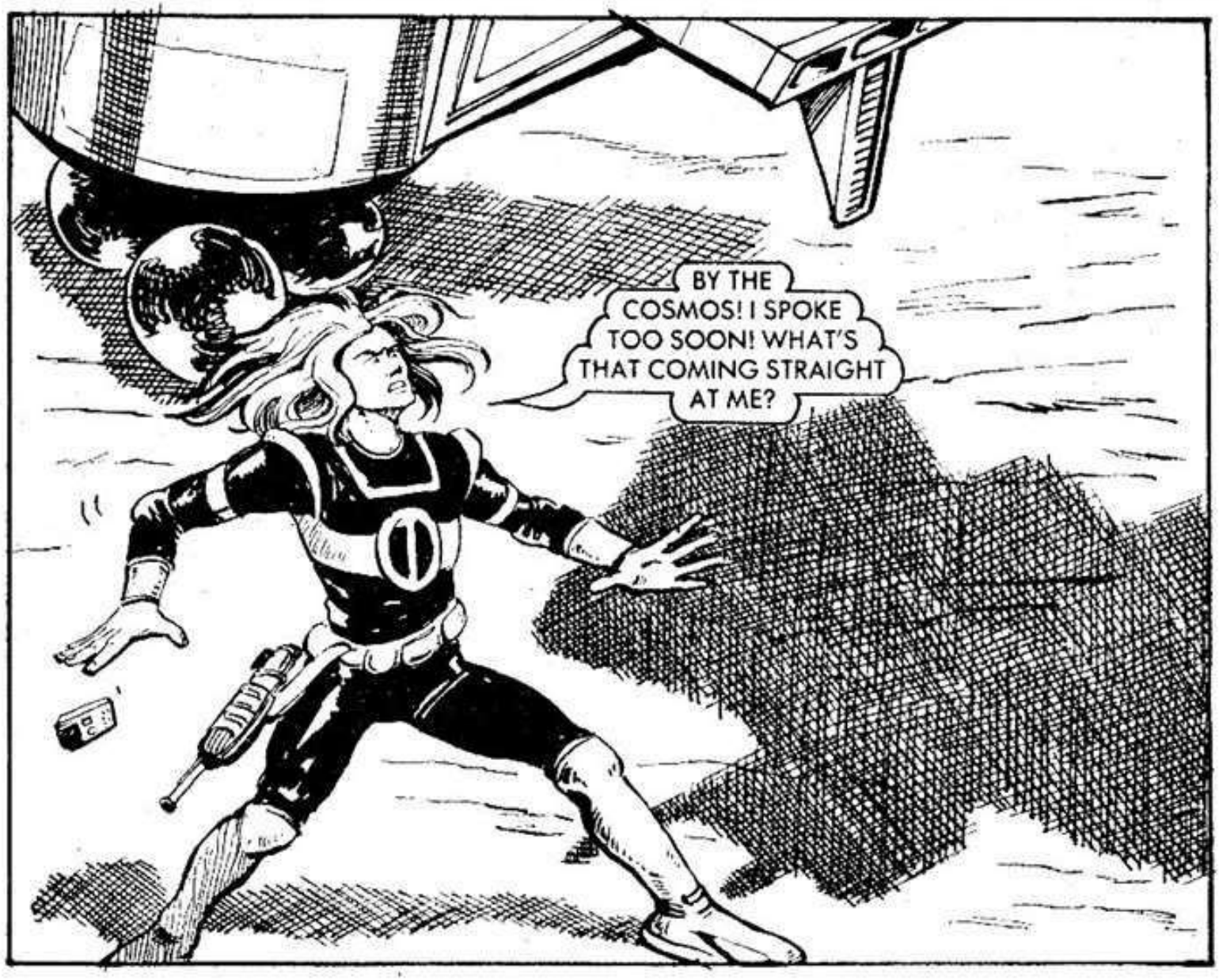
LUTE PLUNGED ON, ENCASED IN A CLOUD OF BOILING ROCK AND FLAME.

IT'S TOO HOT! I'VE GOT TO TRY THE ANTI-GRAVS NOW!
THEY'RE HOLDING! AND THE ROCK'S CRUMBLING AWAY!
SAFE LANDING NOW POSSIBLE.

ANALYSIS OF AIR AND BACTERIOLOGICAL COUNT IS GOOD.
IN THAT CASE I'LL GET THIS SUIT OFF. IS YOUR MAYDAY BEACON STILL WORKING, ARCHEE?

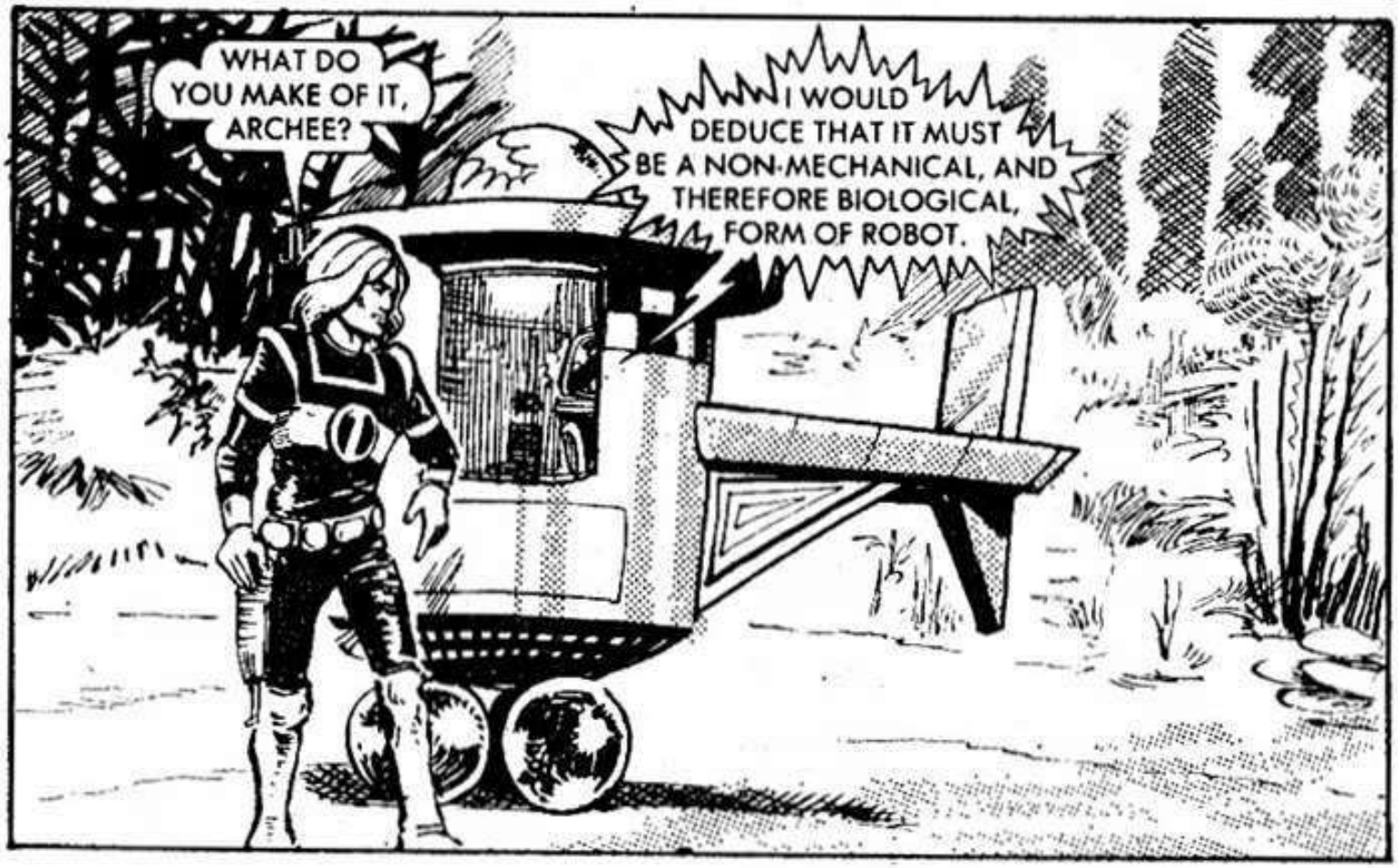

YES. BUT I SUGGEST YOU FOLLOW THE STANDARD SPACE PROCEDURE AND SET THE BIO-ALARM FROM YOUR SURVIVAL KIT.
I WAS ABOUT TO DO IT.

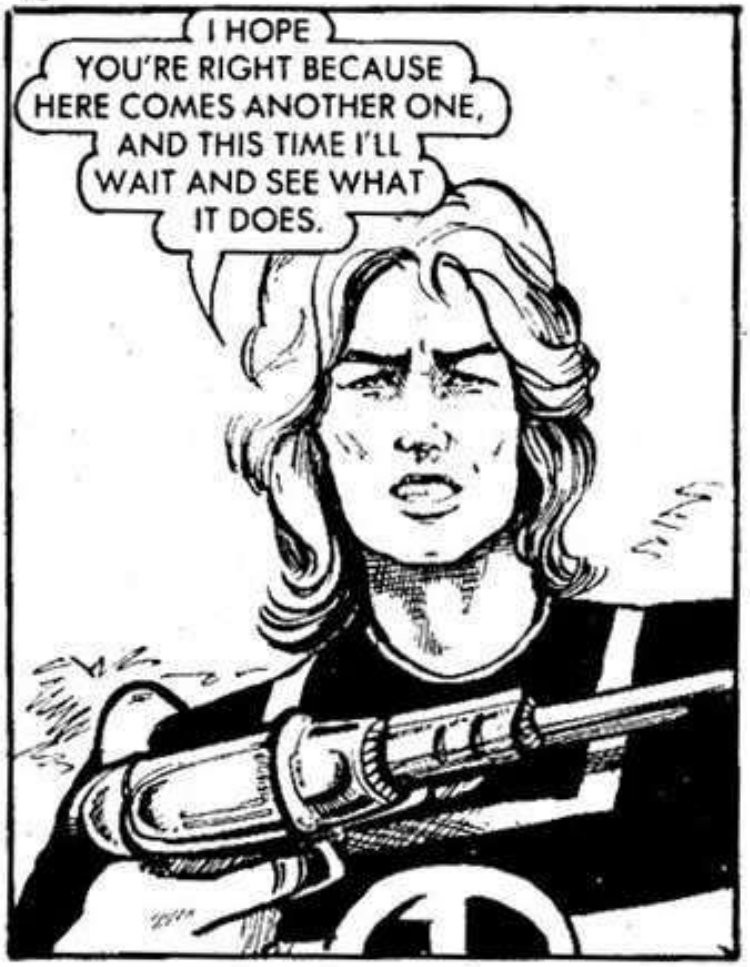

THE BIO-ALARM WAS DESIGNED TO DETECT LIFE FORMS BEFORE THEY COULD GET NEAR A SPACER.
THIS LOOKS A NICE SORT OF PLACE TO SPEND A FEW WEEKS' HOLIDAY UNTIL SPACE LAB PICKS ME UP.


BY THE COSMOS! I SPOKE TOO SOON! WHAT'S THAT COMING STRAIGHT AT ME?

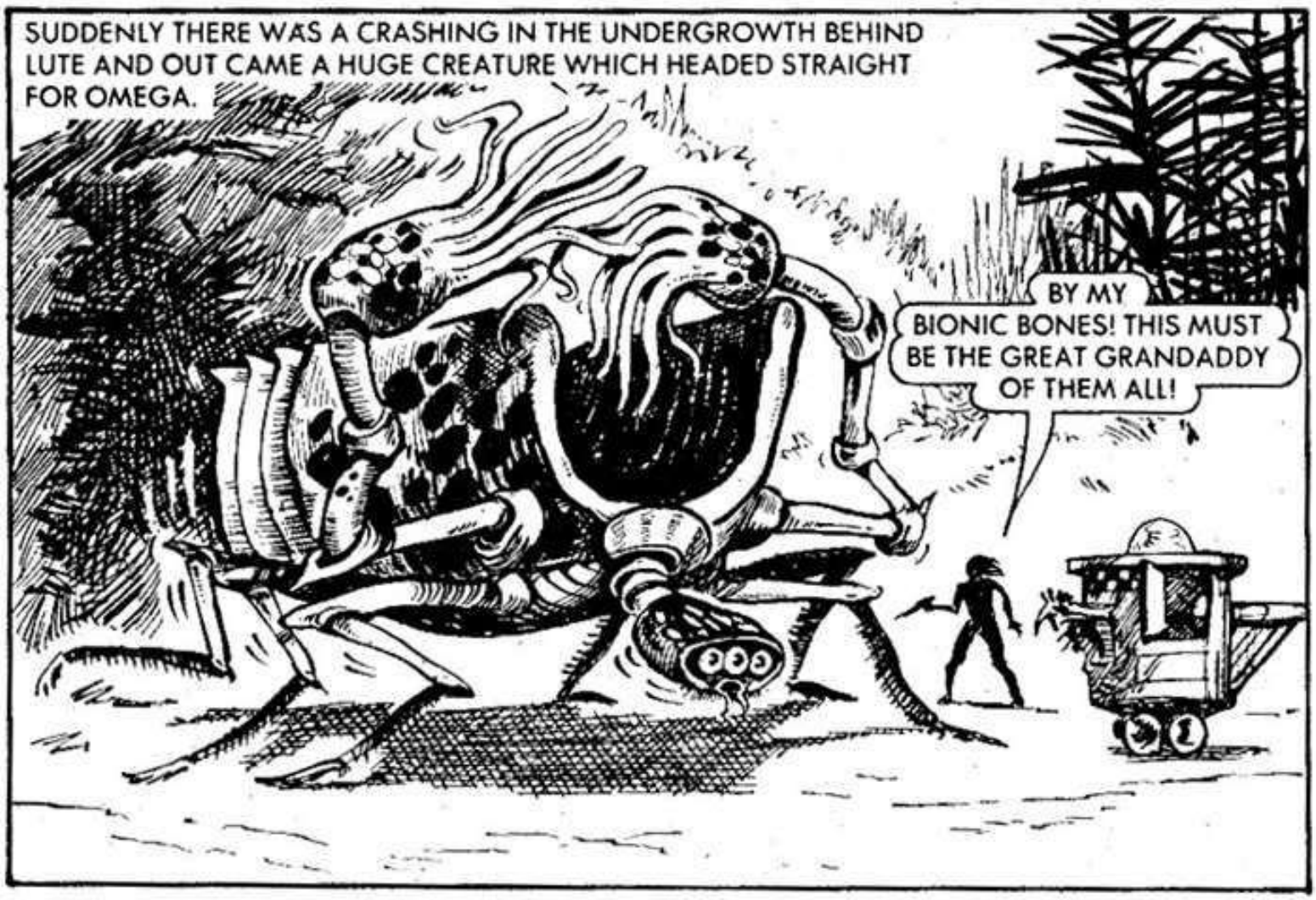
MY BLASTER! IF I CAN JUST GET ONE SHOT . . .
GOT IT! RIGHT ON THE BUTTON!

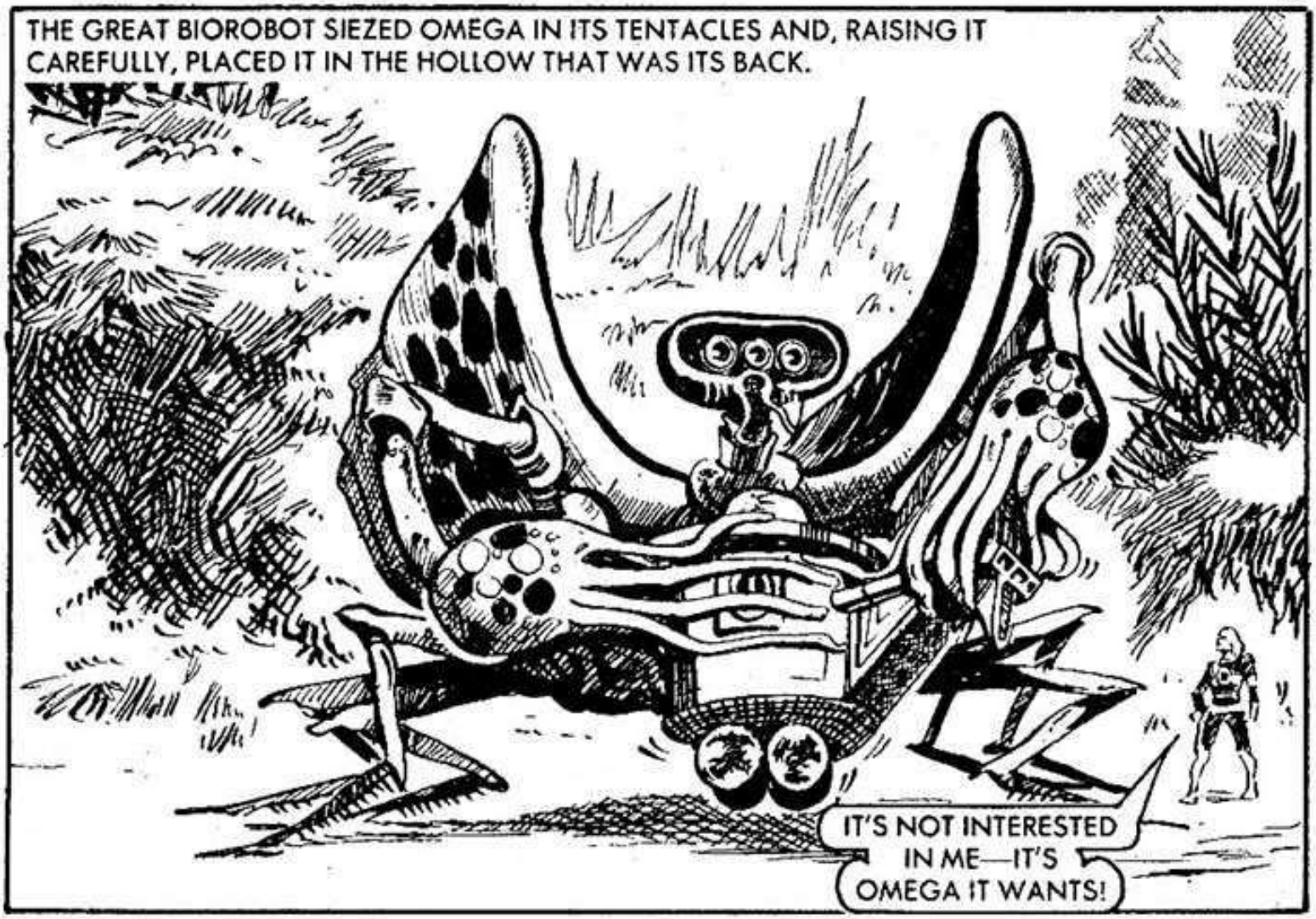
PUZZLED AT THE APPARENT FAILURE OF THE BIO-ALARM, LUTE EXAMINED THE REMAINS OF THE CREATURE.
I DON'T GET IT! THE ALARM'S WORKING PROPERLY AND THIS LOOKS LIKE A FORM OF LIFE—YET IT DOESN'T REGISTER.

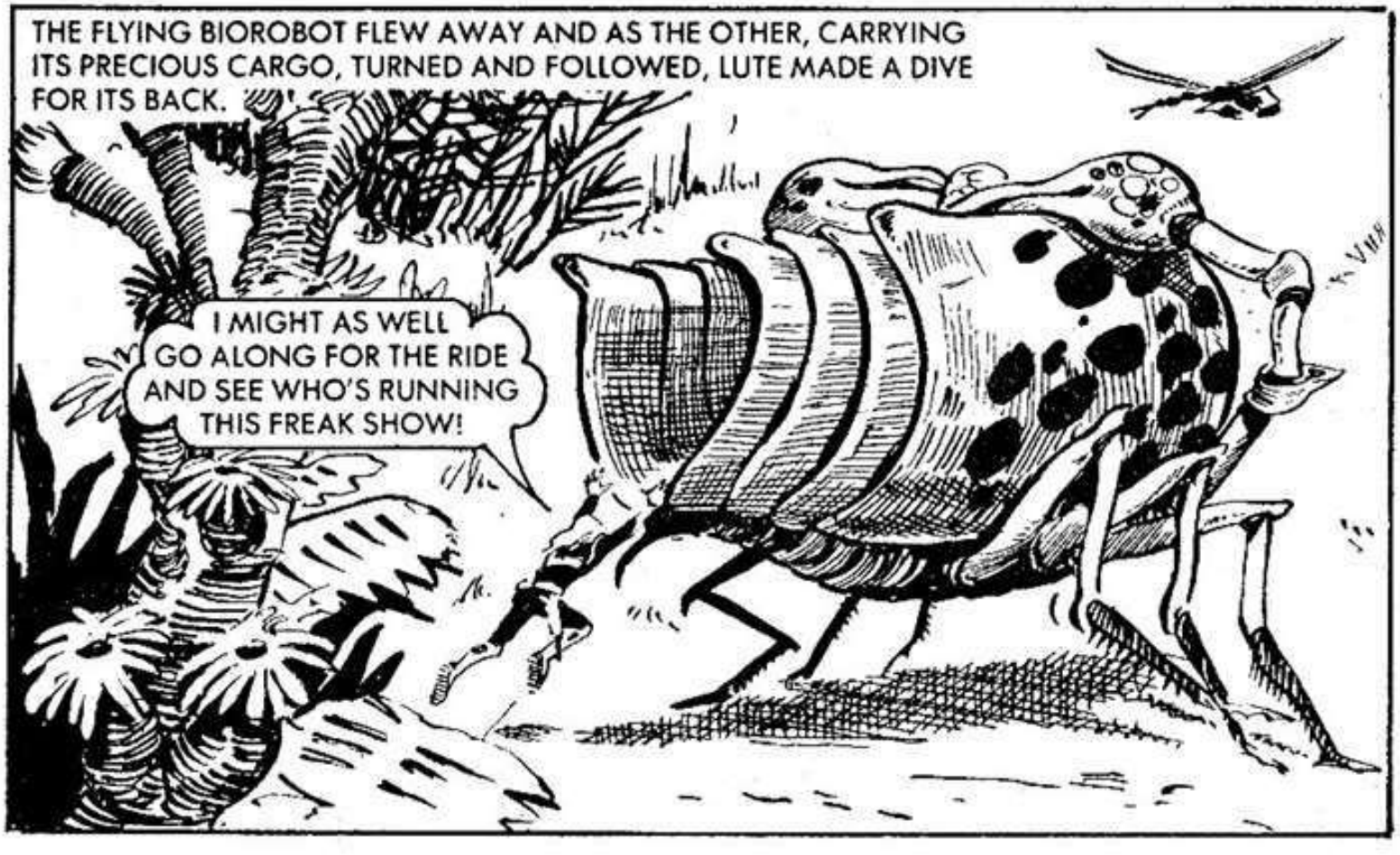

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, ARCHEE?
I WOULD DEDUCE THAT IT MUST BE A NON-MECHANICAL, AND THEREFORE BIOLOGICAL, FORM OF ROBOT.


I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT BECAUSE HERE COMES ANOTHER ONE, AND THIS TIME I'LL WAIT AND SEE WHAT IT DOES.

SILENTLY THE INSECT-LIKE ROBOT HOVERED OVER OMEGA, IGNORING LUTE.
IT MUST BE GUIDING SOMEONE OR SOMETHING HERE.


SUDDENLY THERE WAS A CRASHING IN THE UNDERGROWTH BEHIND LUTE AND OUT CAME A HUGE CREATURE WHICH HEADED STRAIGHT FOR OMEGA.
BY MY BIONIC BONES! THIS MUST BE THE GREAT GRANDADDY OF THEM ALL!


THE GREAT BIOROBOT SIEZED OMEGA IN ITS TENTACLES AND, RAISING IT CAREFULLY, PLACED IT IN THE HOLLOW THAT WAS ITS BACK.
IT'S NOT INTERESTED IN ME—IT'S OMEGA IT WANTS!


THE FLYING BIOROBOT FLEW AWAY AND AS THE OTHER, CARRYING ITS PRECIOUS CARGO, TURNED AND FOLLOWED, LUTE MADE A DIVE FOR ITS BACK.
I MIGHT AS WELL GO ALONG FOR THE RIDE AND SEE WHO'S RUNNING THIS FREAK SHOW!

UNCARING FOR LUTE'S PRESENCE, THE BIOROBOT STOMPED OFF.
OK! HOME JAMES AND DON'T SPARE THE MONSTER POWER.

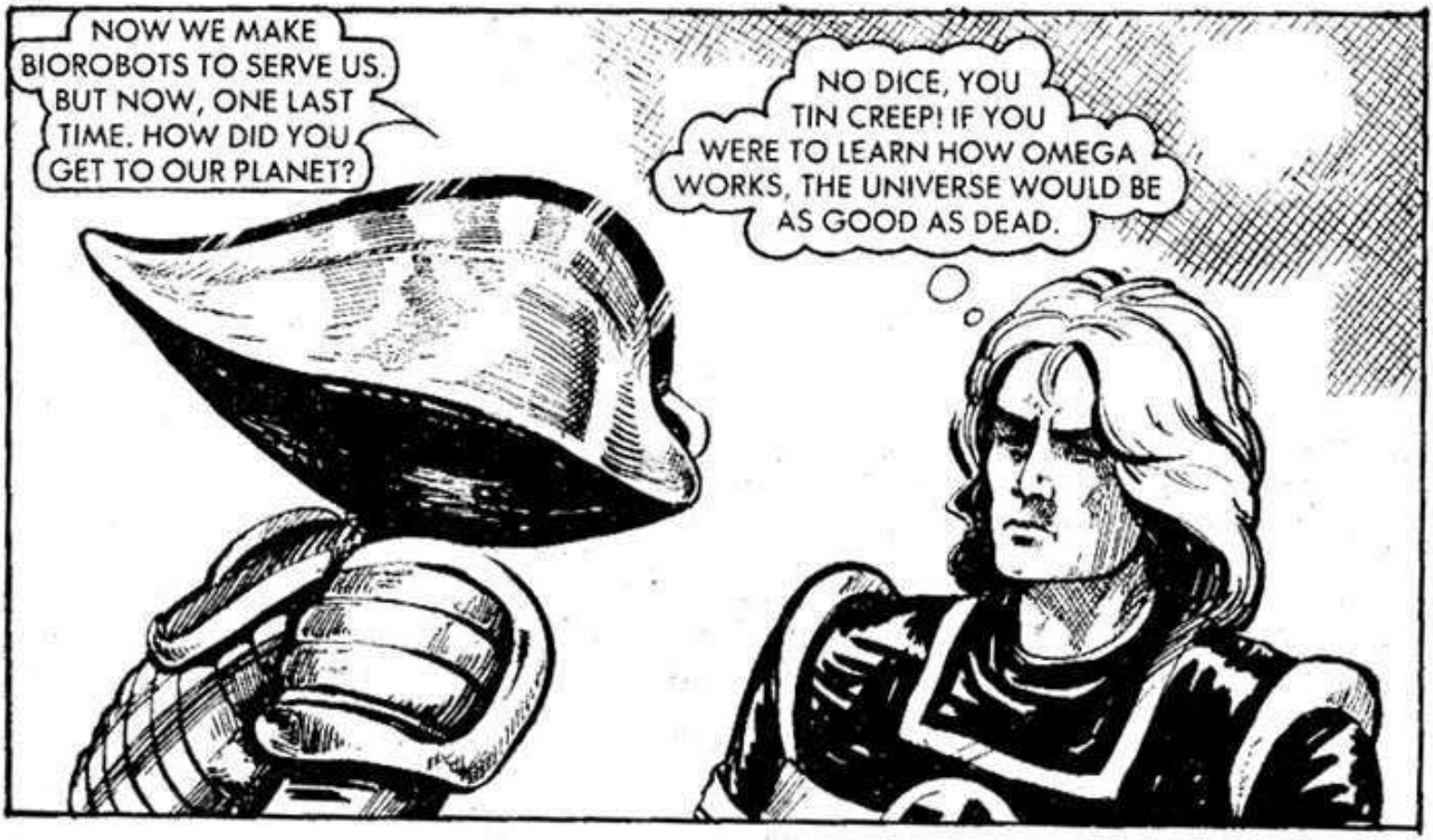
THEY WENT ON AND ON UNTIL AT LAST THEY CAME TO A VAST COMPLEX OF BUILDINGS.
THIS LOOKS LIKE THE END OF THE JOURNEY.

THE BIOROBOT ENTERED A DOOR IN THE OUTER WALL AND WALKED ON THROUGH A LONG CORRIDOR UNTIL IT CAME TO A LARGE HALL.
OH, OH, LOOKS LIKE A RECEPTION COMMITTEE AHEAD. NOW YOU BE QUIET, ARCHEE, AND LET ME DO THE TALKING.
THERE IS NO NEED TO WARN ME. I AM PROGRAMMED TO RESPOND ONLY TO YOUR VOICE.
BLZYK SMLD CLRFGH XBYMJ NPTVSW MZ?
YOU'RE DEFINITELY A MECHANICAL ROBOT. BUT IT'S NO USE MAKING THOSE NOISES TO ME. I DON'T UNDERSTAND A SINGLE CLANK!

THIS BIOROBOT IS EQUIPPED FOR SOUND COMMUNICATION ONLY. WE MUST PSYCHOLATE ITS SPEECH PATTERNS.
AGREED.

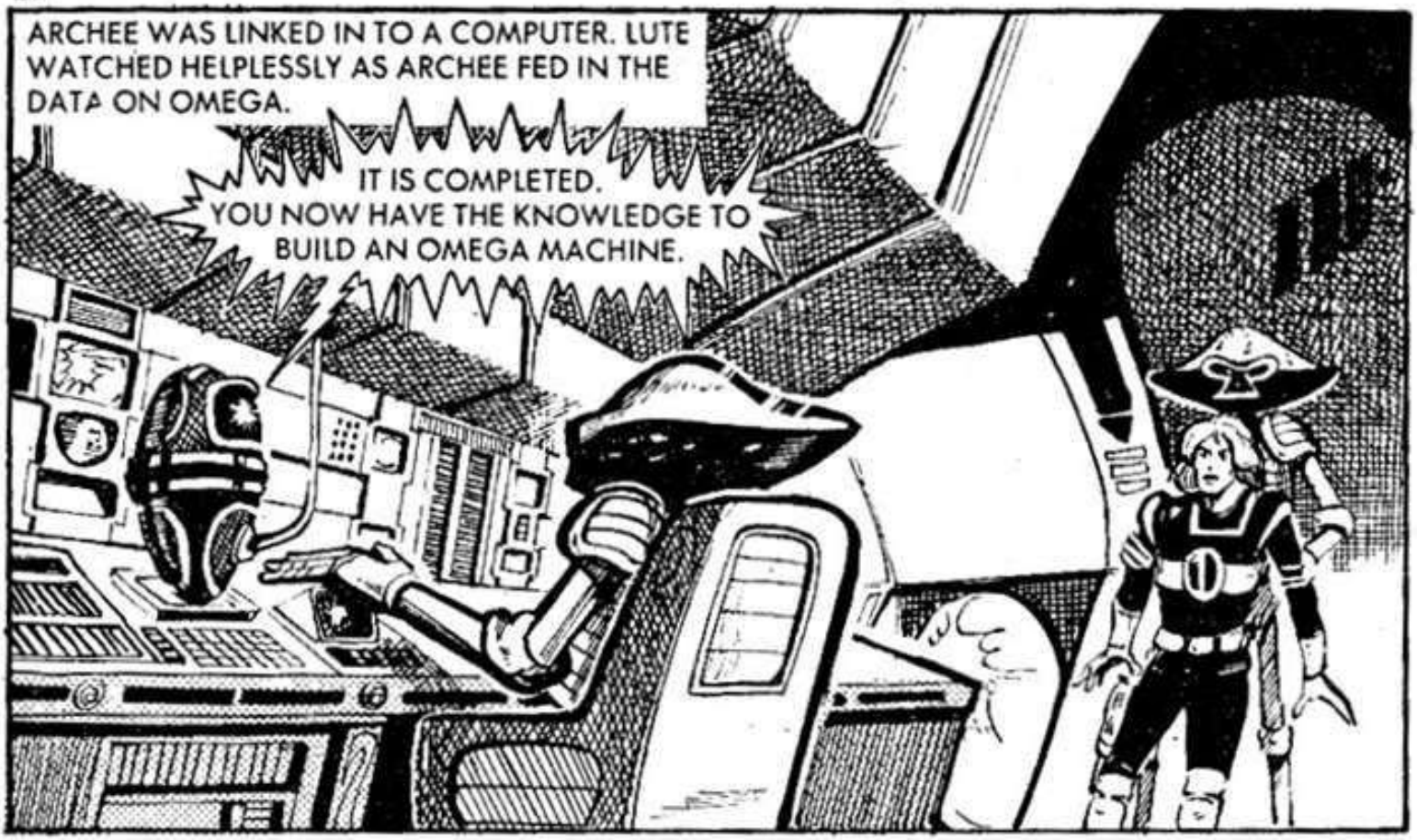
BY ANALYSING THE WAVE FORMS OF LUTE'S SPEECH THE ALIEN ROBOTS QUICKLY CONVERTED THEM INTO LANGUAGE AND WITHIN MINUTES WERE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE.
WHERE ARE YOU FROM? AND WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR JOURNEY?
YOU BE A GOOD ROBOT AND TAKE ME TO YOUR MASTER AND I'LL TELL HIM, OK?

THE ROBOT'S EYES BLAZED WITH FURY AND BLASTED A BEAM OF WHITE ENERGY AT LUTE THAT HURLED HIM ACROSS THE ROOM, EVERY NERVE OF HIS BODY SHRIEKING WITH PAIN.
AAARRGHHHH!
ONCE THERE WERE MANY SUCH AS YOU, BUT WE DESTROYED THEM AND NOW WE ARE THE MASTERS!
OH, BOY! HAVE I PUT MY SPACE BOOTS IN IT THIS TIME!


NOW WE MAKE BIOROBOTS TO SERVE US. BUT NOW, ONE LAST TIME. HOW DID YOU GET TO OUR PLANET?
NO DICE, YOU TIN CREEP! IF YOU WERE TO LEARN HOW OMEGA WORKS, THE UNIVERSE WOULD BE AS GOOD AS DEAD.

YOU CAN GO TO THE SCRAP-HEAP!
VERY WELL. WE SHALL EXTERMINATE YOU.
STOP! DO NOT KILL HIM AND I WILL TELL YOU WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW.

ARCHEE! YOU TRAITOR! I TOLD YOU TO KEEP QUIET! YOU MUSTN'T TELL THEM ANYTHING!
IT IS MY FIRST DUTY TO PROTECT YOU. PLEASE LEAVE THIS TO ME.
IF YOU PROMISE NOT TO HARM HIM, I WILL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT OUR MISSION.
I AGREE.


ARCHEE WAS LINKED IN TO A COMPUTER. LUTE WATCHED HELPLESSLY AS ARCHEE FED IN THE DATA ON OMEGA.
IT IS COMPLETED. YOU NOW HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE TO BUILD AN OMEGA MACHINE.

WE SHALL BUILD ONE OF THESE MACHINES, SEEVUN. WITH IT WE SHALL BECOME MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE.
IT IS GOOD. WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE HUMAN BIOROBOT.

HE SERVES NO FURTHER PURPOSE. TAKE HIM FOR DISSECTION AND CELL REPROCESSING—WE MAY THEN LEARN SOMETHING USEFUL.
YOU'RE NOT KILLING ME AS EASILY AS THAT!

WITH A SUDDEN DESPERATE HEAVE LUTE BROKE FREE FROM THE ROBOT'S GRASP AND CLAWED FOR HIS BLASTER BEFORE THEY COULD MOVE.

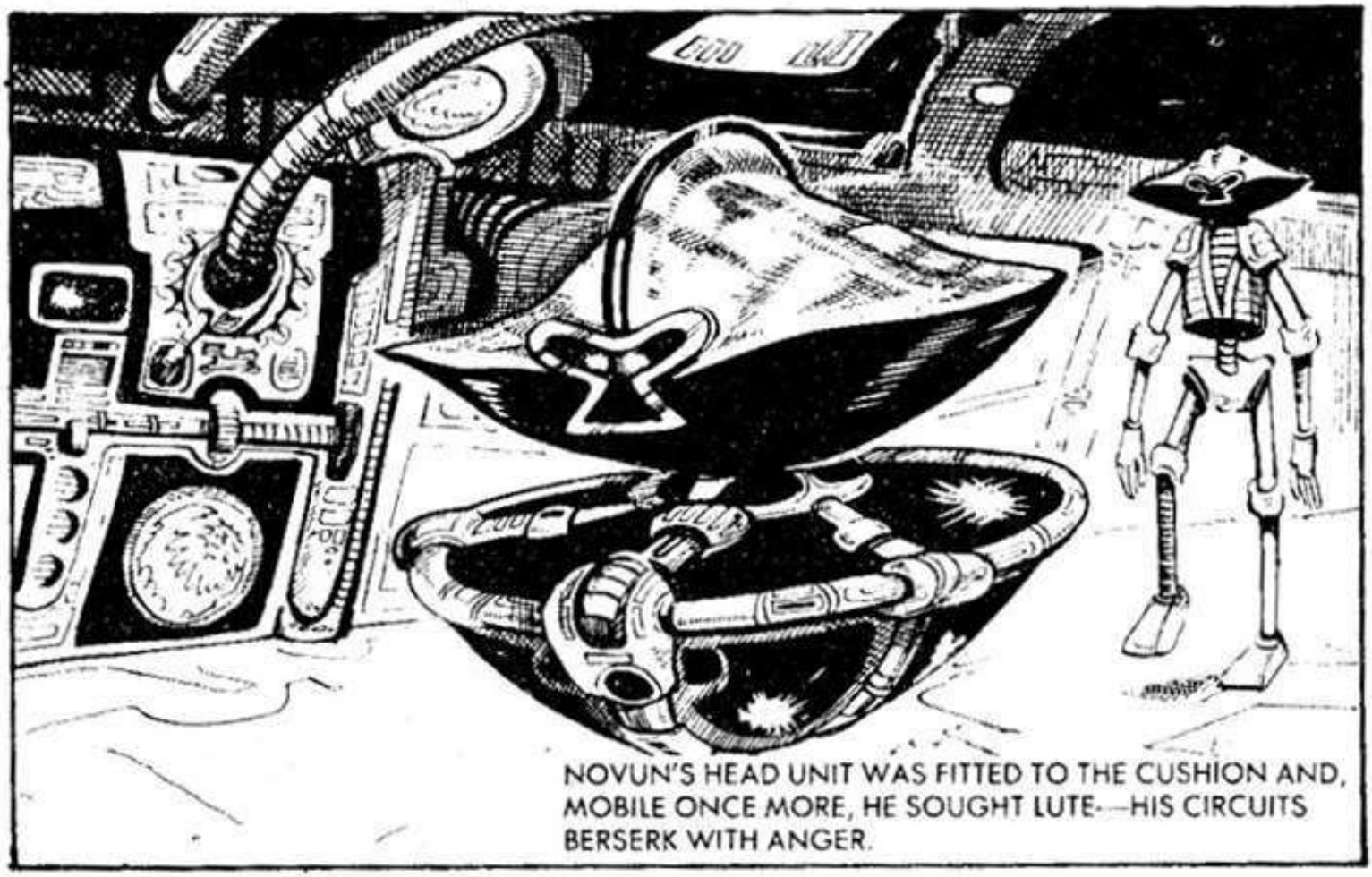
HOW'S THIS FOR A TIN-OPENER?

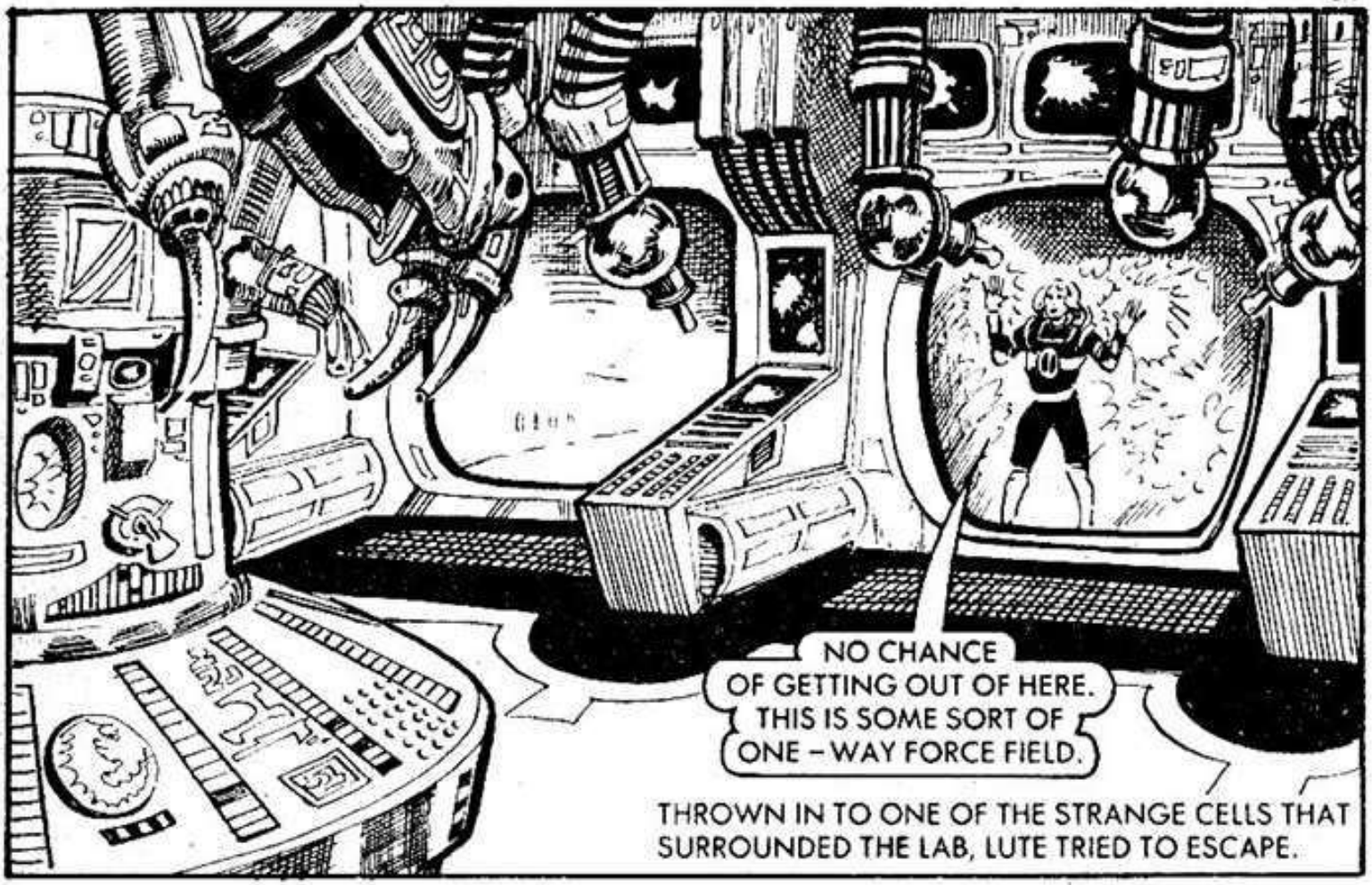
BUT THE FIGHT COULDN'T LAST AND LUTE SAW THE BLASTER MELT IN HIS HAND AS THE ROBOT, SEEVUN, POURED A RAY OF FULL-POWER ENERGY AT IT.
NOW DIE!
NO! NOT YET!

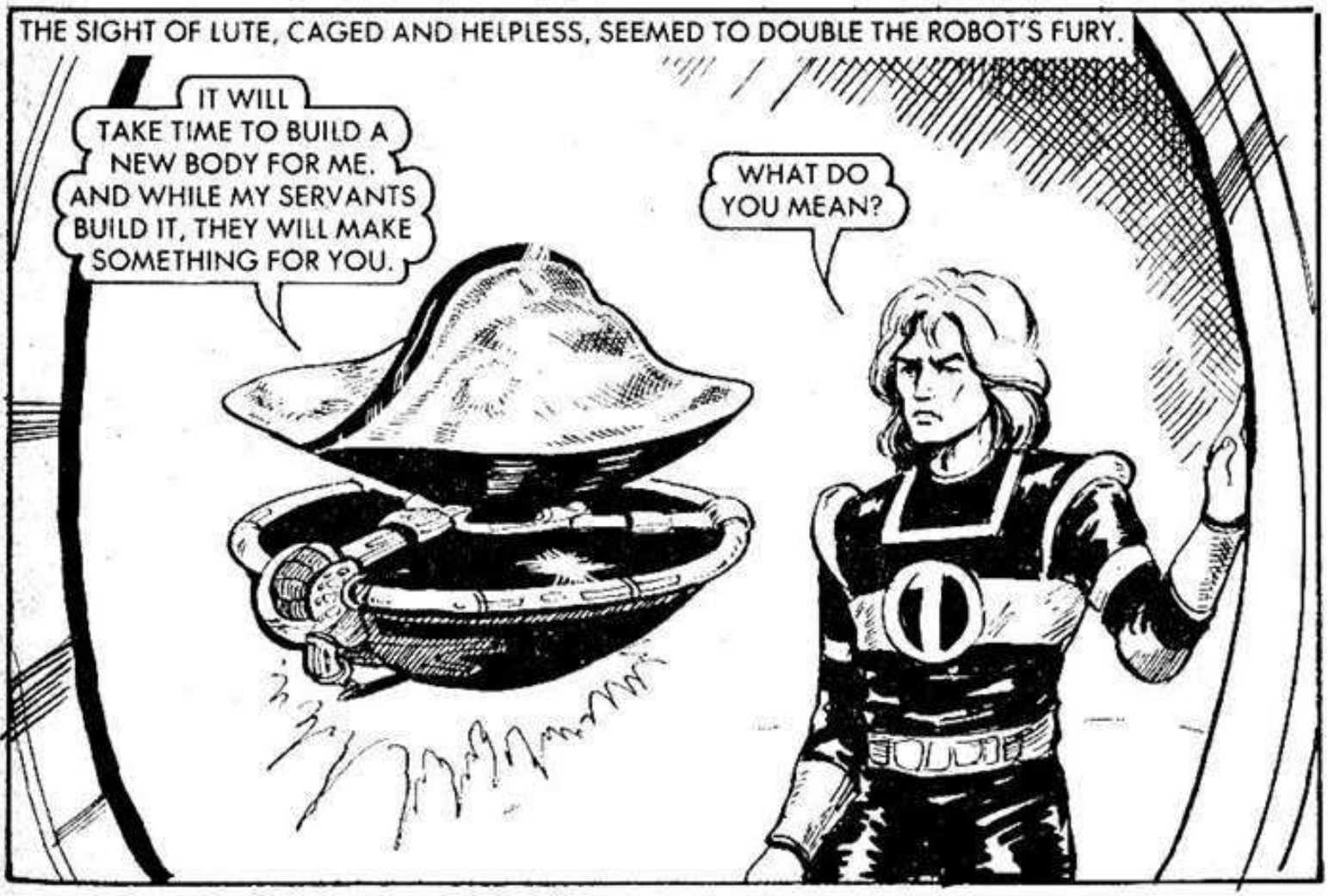
THE BODYLESS HEAD OF THE ROBOT LEADER, NOVUN, SPOKE FROM THE WRECKAGE OF ITSELF.
SO I DIDN'T DESTROY YOU!
MERELY MY LOCOMOTORY AND PRIMARY POWER SYSTEMS. BUT YOU WILL WISH YOU HAD DESTROYED ME.
TAKE HIM TO THE BIOLAB AND SEAL HIM IN A MOULDING CHAMBER!

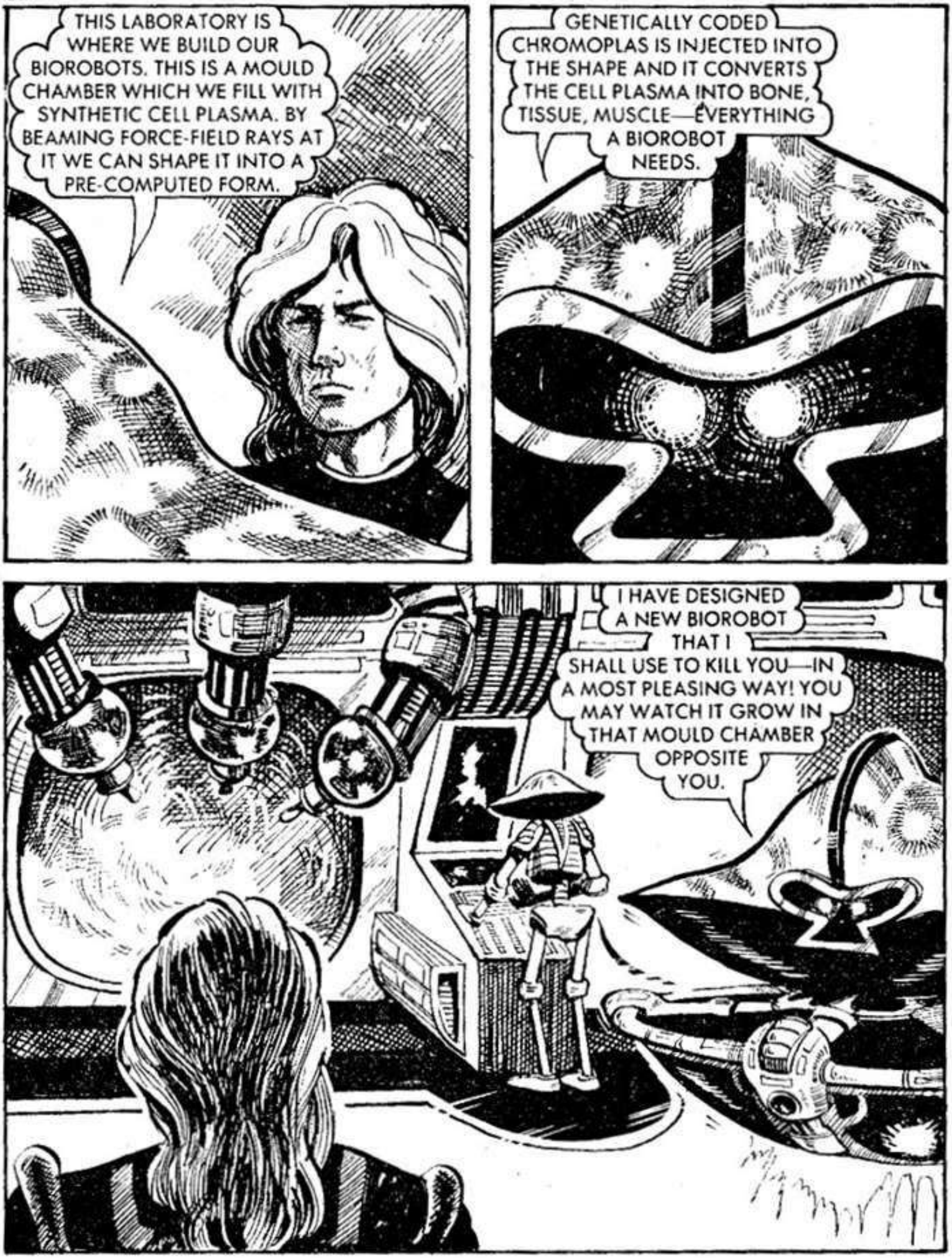
LUTE WAS FORCE MARCHED OUT OF THE GREAT HALL.

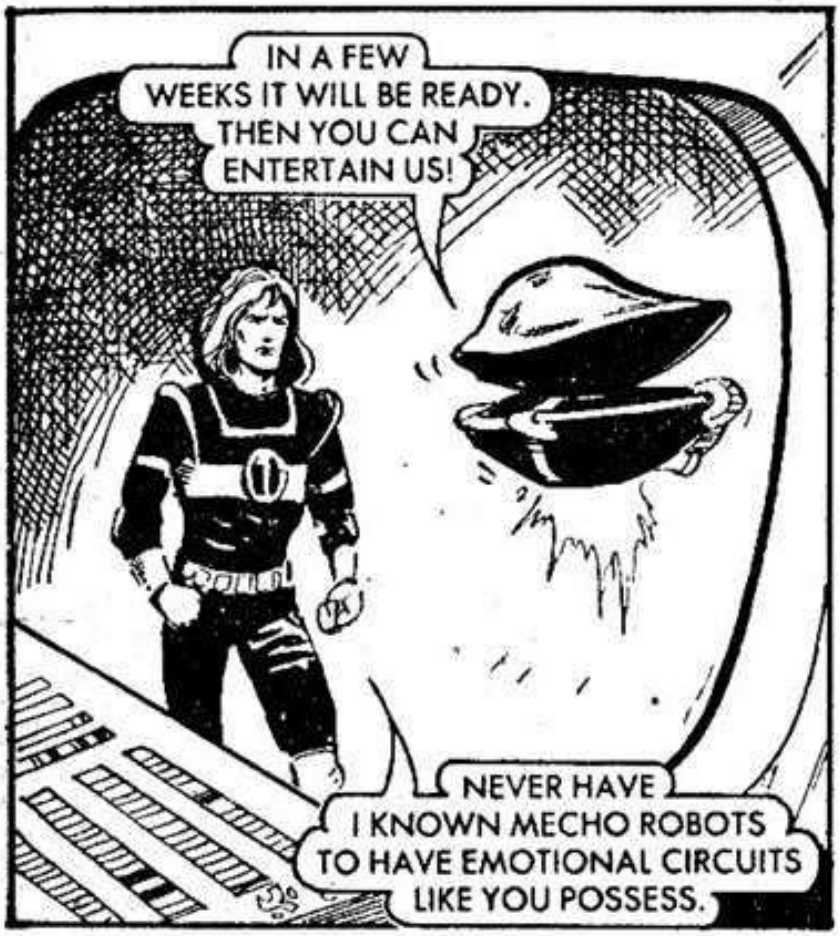
WHAT ARE YOUR INSTRUCTIONS, LEADER?
FETCH ME A GRAVITY CUSHION AND LINK ME TO IT.


NOVUN'S HEAD UNIT WAS FITTED TO THE CUSHION AND, MOBILE ONCE MORE, HE SOUGHT LUTE—HIS CIRCUITS BERSERK WITH ANGER.

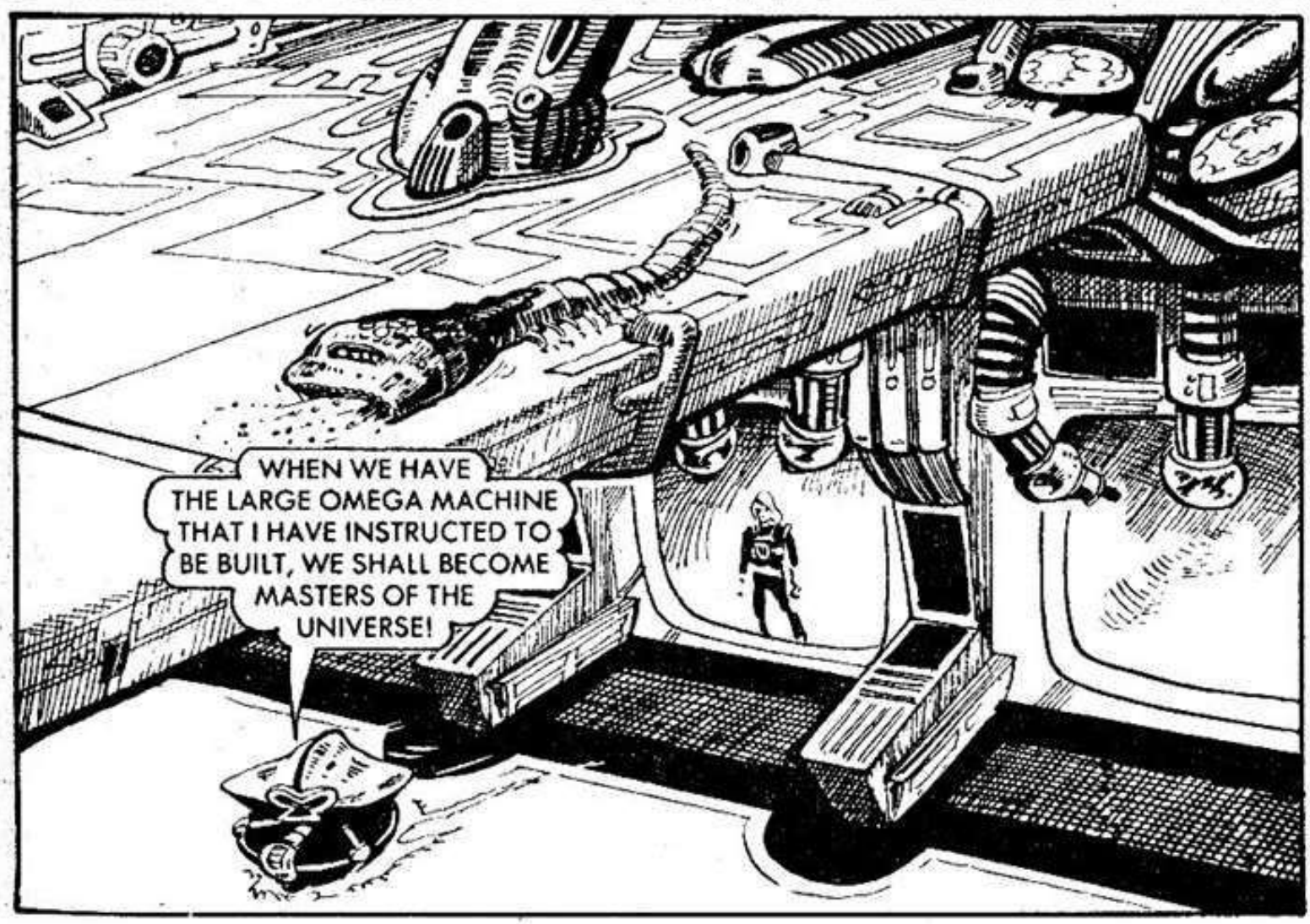

NO CHANCE OF GETTING OUT OF HERE. THIS IS SOME SORT OF ONE – WAY FORCE FIELD.
THROWN IN TO ONE OF THE STRANGE CELLS THAT SURROUNDED THE LAB, LUTE TRIED TO ESCAPE.

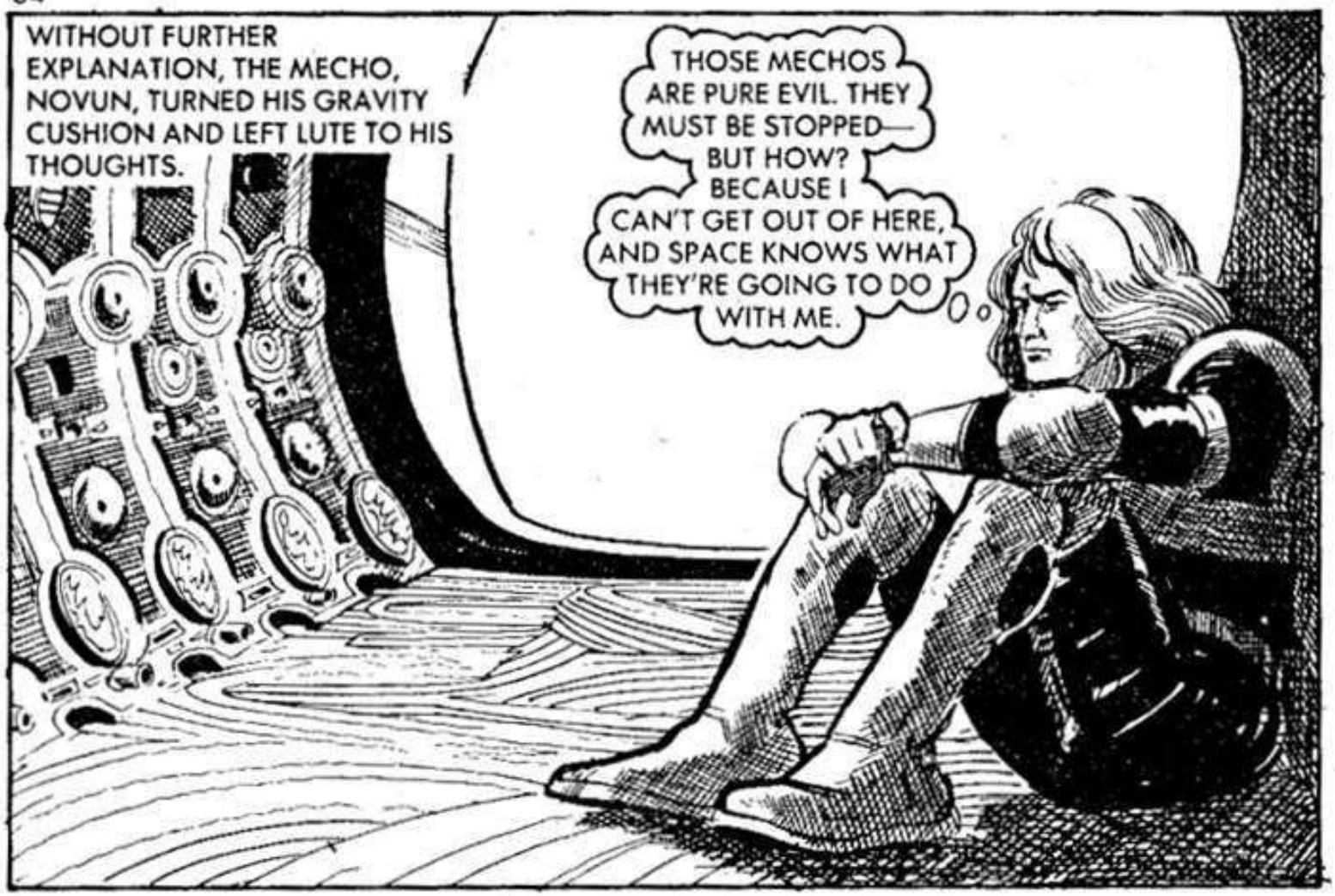

THE SIGHT OF LUTE, CAGED AND HELPLESS, SEEMED TO DOUBLE THE ROBOT'S FURY.
IT WILL TAKE TIME TO BUILD A NEW BODY FOR ME. AND WHILE MY SERVANTS BUILD IT, THEY WILL MAKE SOMETHING FOR YOU.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?


THIS LABORATORY IS WHERE WE BUILD OUR BIOROBOTS. THIS IS A MOULD CHAMBER WHICH WE FILL WITH SYNTHETIC CELL PLASMA. BY BEAMING FORCE-FIELD RAYS AT IT WE CAN SHAPE IT INTO A PRE-COMPUTED FORM.
GENETICALLY CODED CHROMOPLAS IS INJECTED INTO THE SHAPE AND IT CONVERTS THE CELL PLASMA INTO BONE, TISSUE, MUSCLE—EVERYTHING A BIOROBOT NEEDS.
I HAVE DESIGNED A NEW BIOROBOT THAT I SHALL USE TO KILL YOU—IN A MOST PLEASING WAY! YOU MAY WATCH IT GROW IN THAT MOULD CHAMBER OPPOSITE YOU.

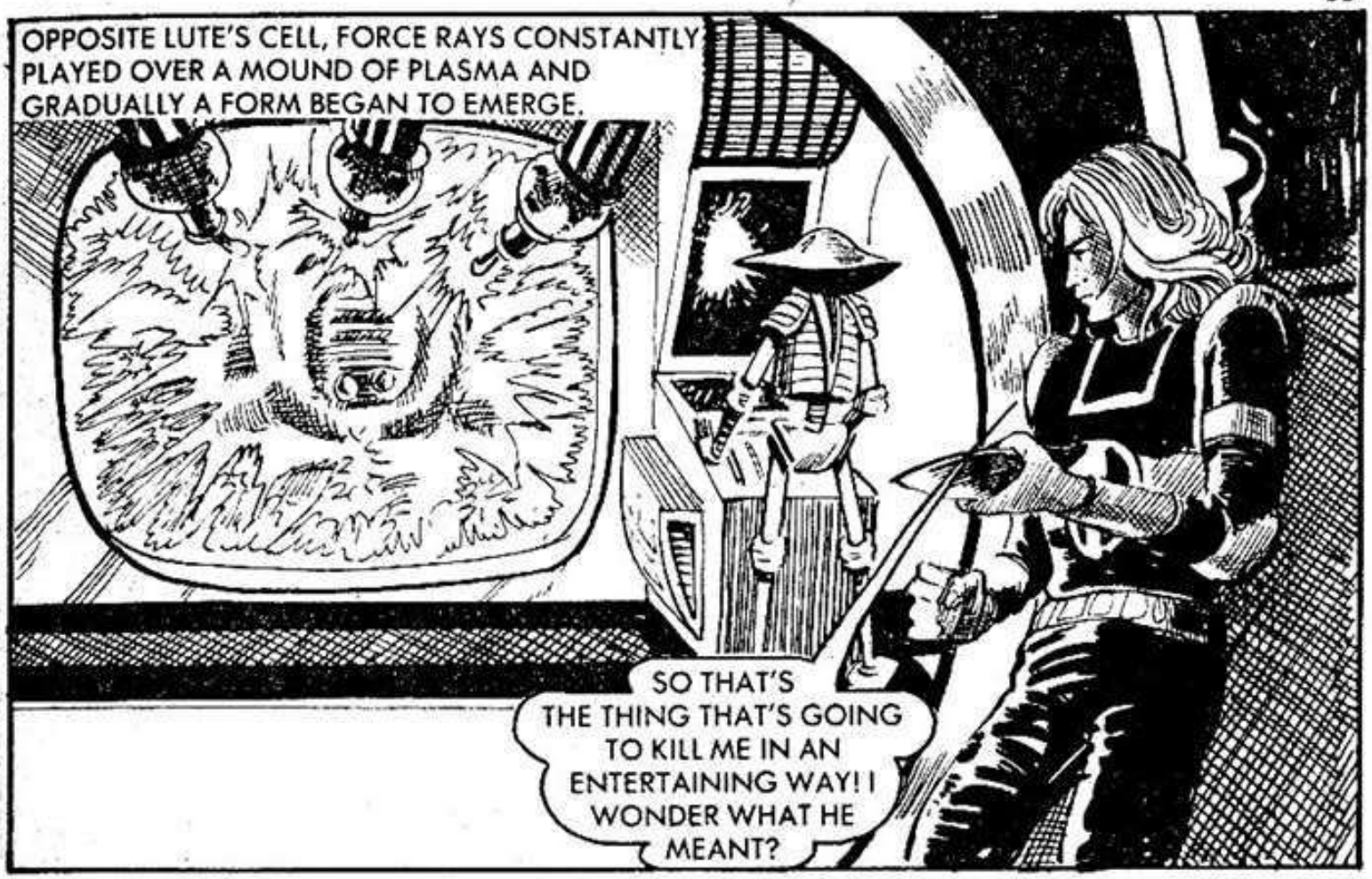

IN A FEW WEEKS IT WILL BE READY. THEN YOU CAN ENTERTAIN US!
NEVER HAVE I KNOWN MECHO ROBOTS TO HAVE EMOTIONAL CIRCUITS LIKE YOU POSSESS.

THAT WAS THE MISTAKE OUR ORIGINAL CREATORS MADE. THEY GAVE US EMOTIONS SO WE COULD FUNCTION BETTER. BUT WE FOUND THAT INSTEAD OF LOVING THEM WE HATED OUR CREATORS, AND SO WE KILLED THEM ALL. NOW WE ARE THE RIGHTFUL MASTERS OF THIS PLANET.


WHEN WE HAVE THE LARGE OMEGA MACHINE THAT I HAVE INSTRUCTED TO BE BUILT, WE SHALL BECOME MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE!

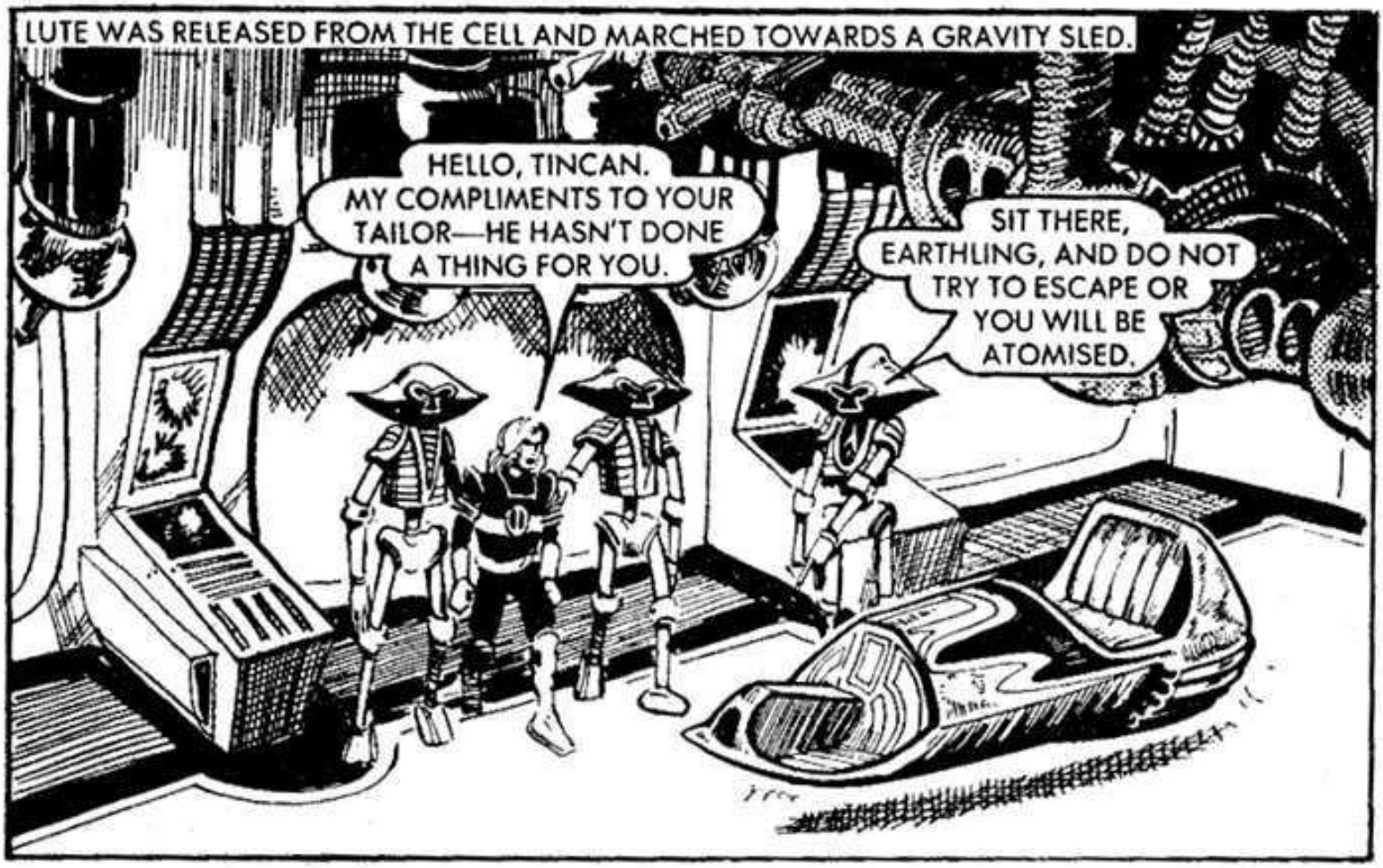

WITHOUT FURTHER EXPLANATION, THE MECHO, NOVUN, TURNED HIS GRAVITY CUSHION AND LEFT LUTE TO HIS THOUGHTS.
THOSE MECHOS ARE PURE EVIL. THEY MUST BE STOPPED— BUT HOW? BECAUSE I CAN'T GET OUT OF HERE, AND SPACE KNOWS WHAT THEY'RE GOING TO DO WITH ME.

TIME DRAGGED ALONG AND LUTE LOST TRACK OF THE DAYS. HIS NEEDS WERE ATTENDED TO BY SERVO BIOROBOTS WHO COULD PASS FOOD THOUGH THE ONE – WAY FORCE FIELD THAT SEALED LUTE IN.
DON'T YOU SERVE ANYTHING EXCEPT PLASMUSH IN THIS HOTEL?


OPPOSITE LUTE'S CELL, FORCE RAYS CONSTANTLY PLAYED OVER A MOUND OF PLASMA AND GRADUALLY A FORM BEGAN TO EMERGE.
SO THAT'S THE THING THAT'S GOING TO KILL ME IN AN ENTERTAINING WAY! I WONDER WHAT HE MEANT?

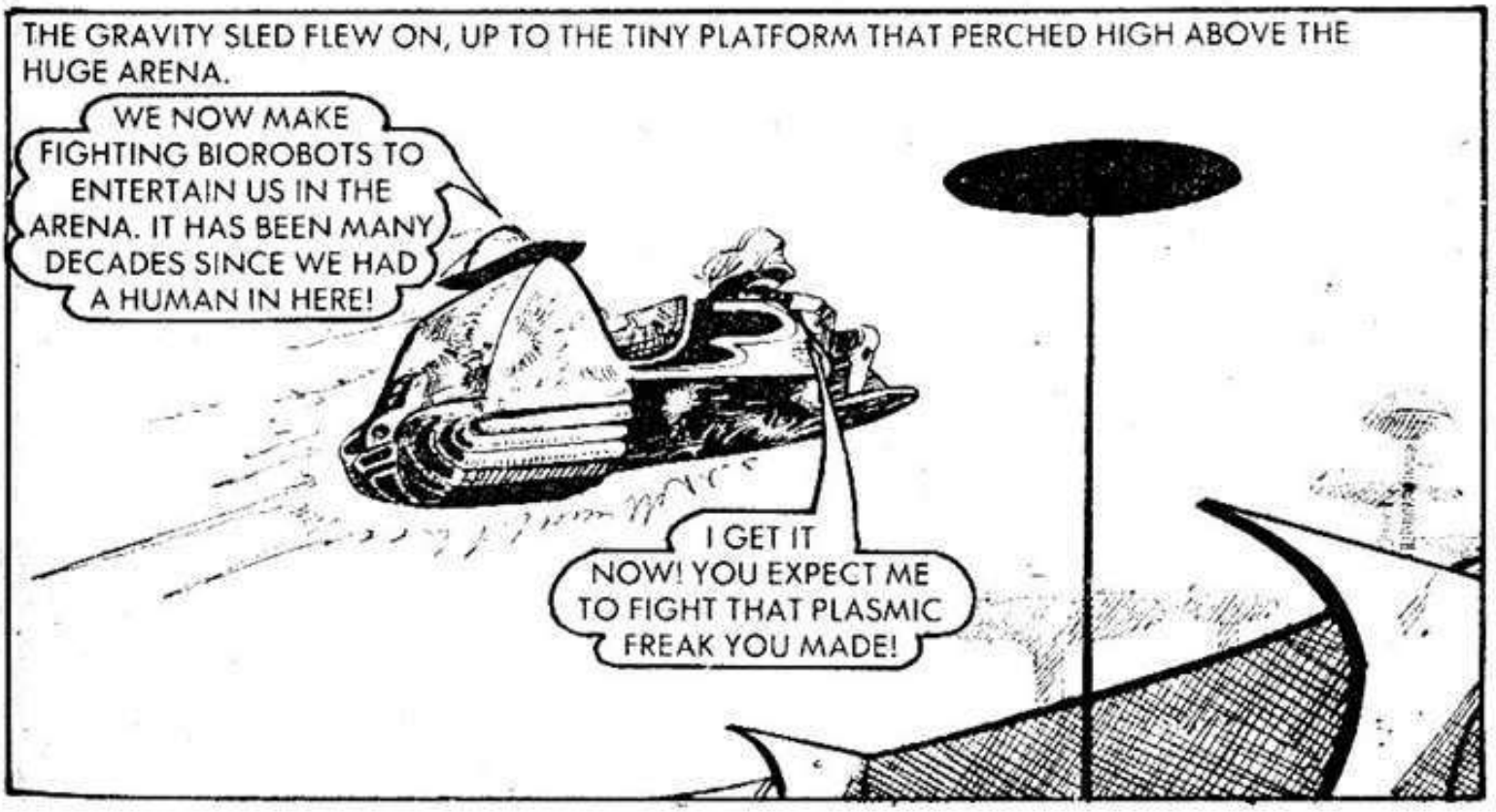
THE DAY CAME WHEN THE CREATURE WAS FINISHED. IT STARED MALEVOLENTLY ACROSS AT LUTE.
I CAN'T SEE IT PROPERLY, BUT IT APPEARS TO HAVE WINGS . . . AND CAN THOSE BE TENTACLES?

I'LL SOON FIND OUT—HERE COMES THAT TIN CREEP IN HIS NEW SUIT.

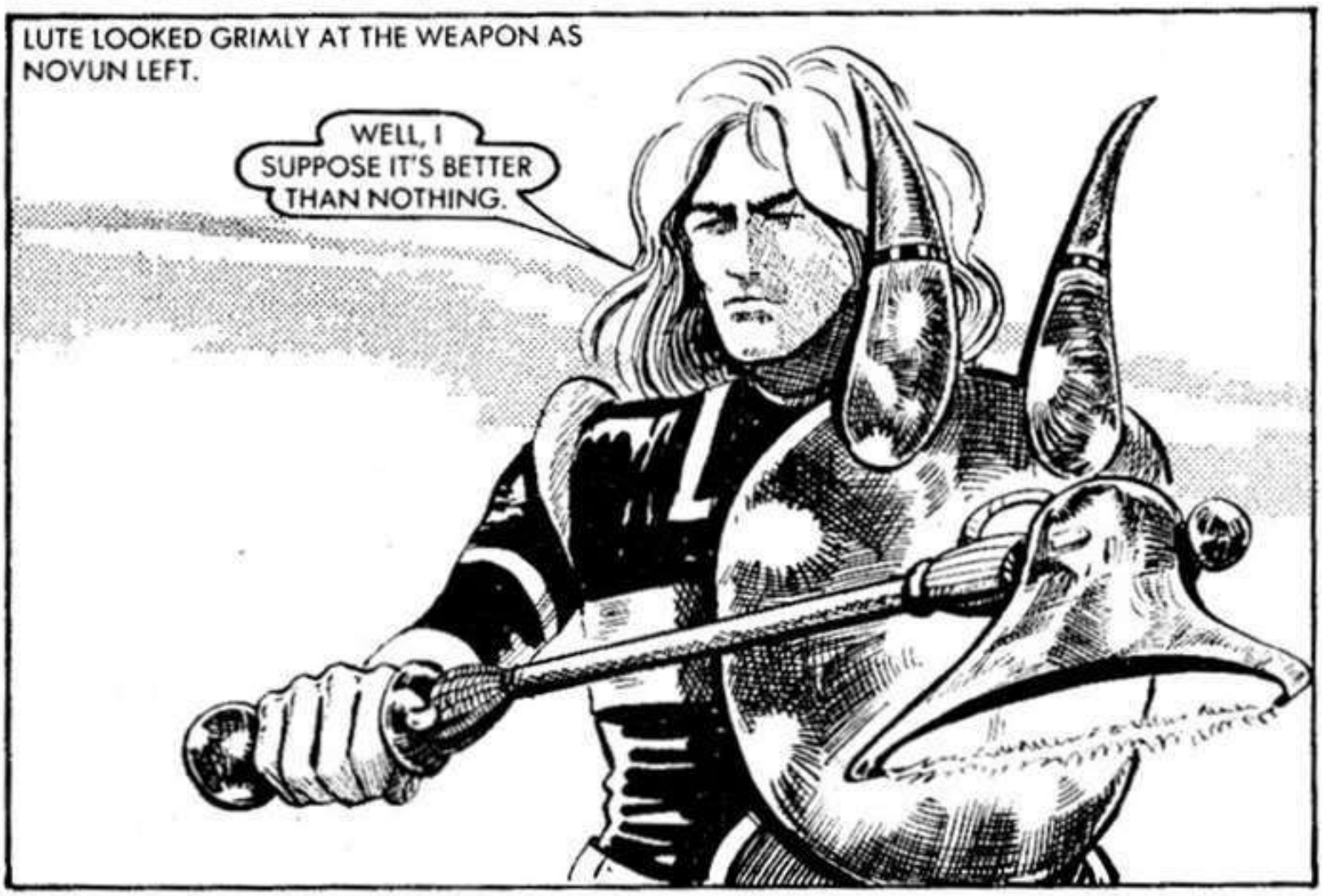

LUTE WAS RELEASED FROM THE CELL AND MARCHED TOWARDS A GRAVITY SLED.
HELLO, TINCAN. MY COMPLIMENTS TO YOUR TAILOR—HE HASN'T DONE A THING FOR YOU.
SIT THERE, EARTHLING, AND DO NOT TRY TO ESCAPE OR YOU WILL BE ATOMISED.

I PERSONALLY WILL TAKE YOU ON YOUR LAST JOURNEY.
AND WHERE MIGHT WE BE GOING?

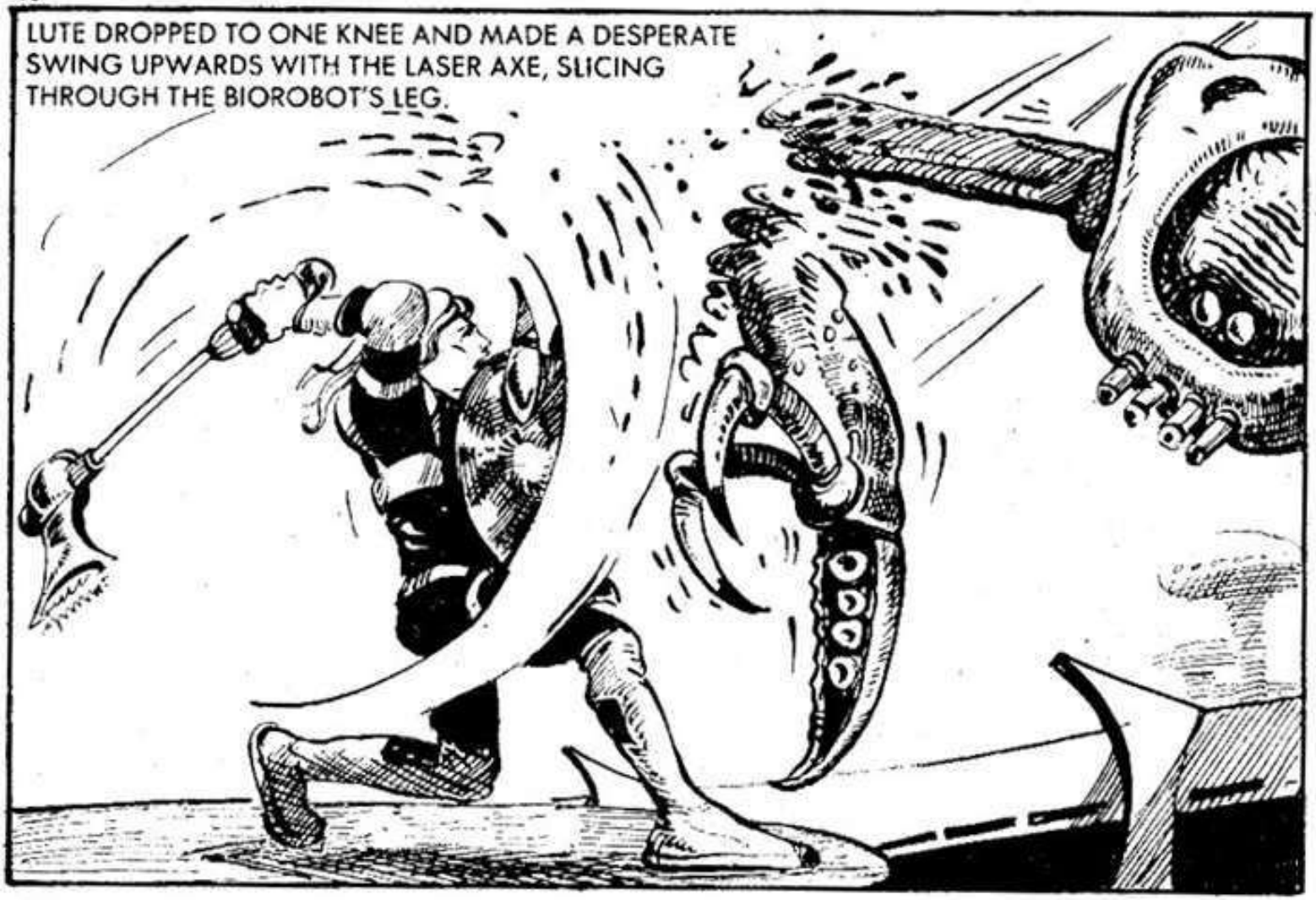
SUDDENLY THERE WAS OPEN SKY AND CLEAN AIR ALL AROUND THEM.
WELCOME TO THE ARENA!


THE GRAVITY SLED FLEW ON, UP TO THE TINY PLATFORM THAT PERCHED HIGH ABOVE THE HUGE ARENA.
WE NOW MAKE FIGHTING BIOROBOTS TO ENTERTAIN US IN THE ARENA. IT HAS BEEN MANY DECADES SINCE WE HAD A HUMAN IN HERE!
I GET IT NOW! YOU EXPECT ME TO FIGHT THAT PLASMIC FREAK YOU MADE!

DO YOU EXPECT ME TO FIGHT WITH MY BARE HANDS?
NO! YOU'D DIE FAR TOO QUICKLY. I SHALL GIVE YOU A LASER AXE AND SHIELD.


LUTE LOOKED GRIMLY AT THE WEAPON AS NOVUN LEFT.
WELL, I SUPPOSE IT'S BETTER THAN NOTHING.

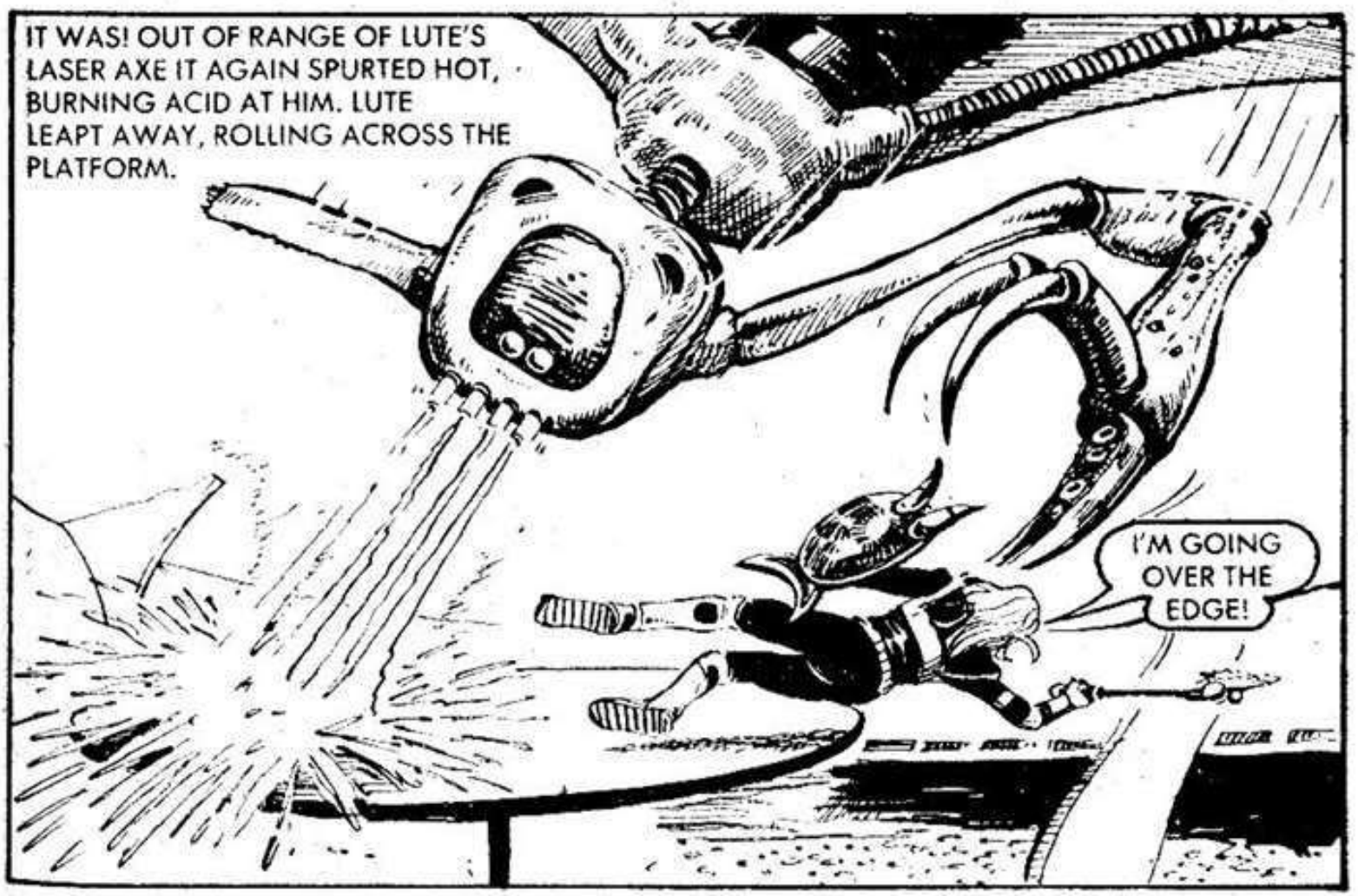
THERE ROSE A GREAT ROAR FROM THE ROBOT CROWD AND LUTE SPUN AROUND TO SEE THE HUGE BIOROBOT DIVING AT HIM.
BY THE COSMOS! IT'S MASSIVE!


LUTE DROPPED TO ONE KNEE AND MADE A DESPERATE SWING UPWARDS WITH THE LASER AXE, SLICING THROUGH THE BIOROBOT'S LEG.

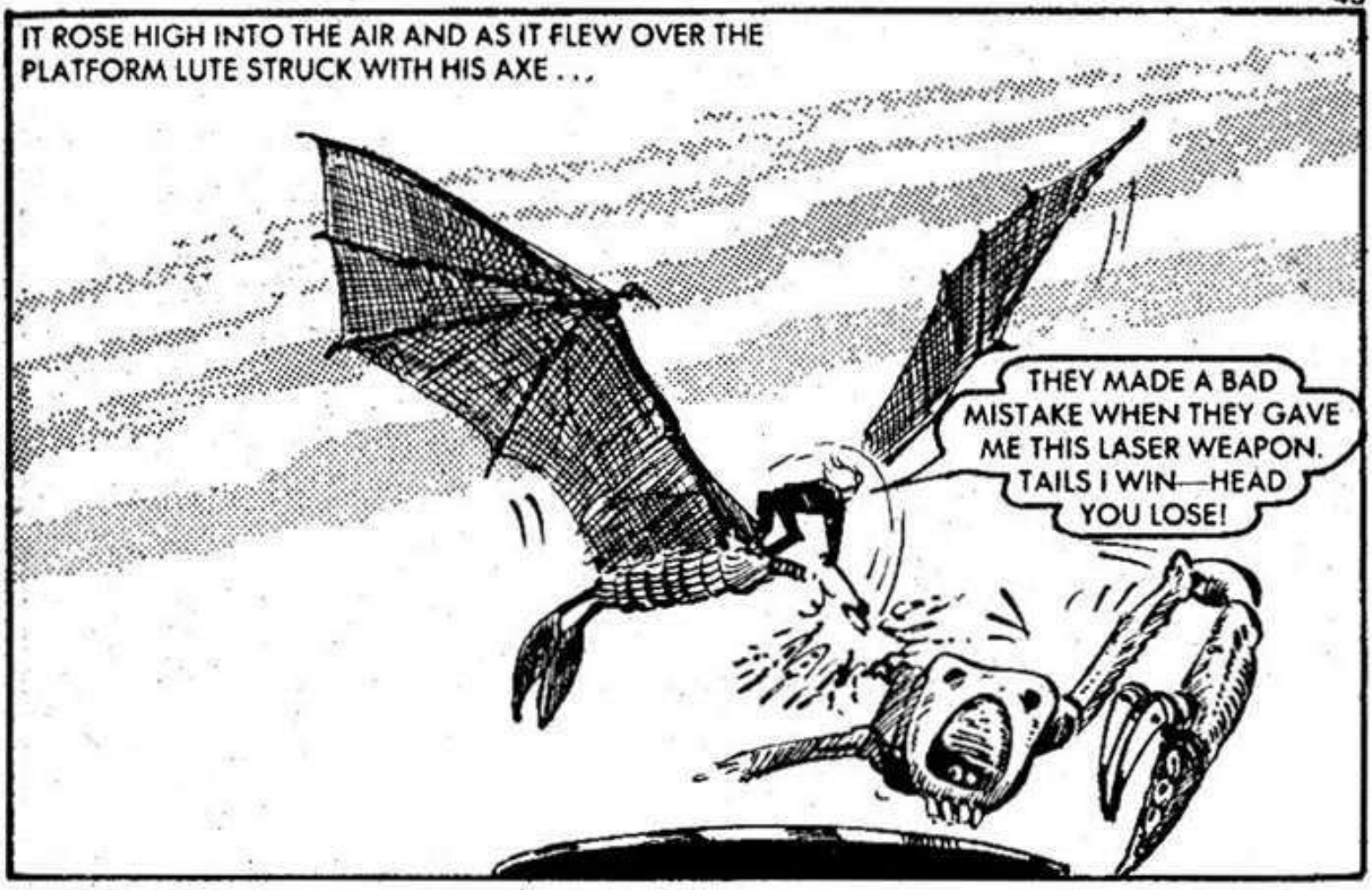
THEN HE FLUNG HIMSELF BACKWARDS, HIS SHIELD HELD HIGH AS THE BIOROBOT HOSED JETS OF ACID STRAIGHT AT HIM.
IF THAT TOUCHES ME I'M A GONER!

THE SHIELD SAVED LUTE FROM THE ACID ATTACK, AND THE BIOROBOT DIVED ON PAST.
BY JUPITER, THAT WAS CLOSE!

LUTE WAITED FOR THE NEXT ATTACK AS THE CREATURE SOARED UP HIGH.
IT'LL BE MORE CAREFUL THIS TIME!

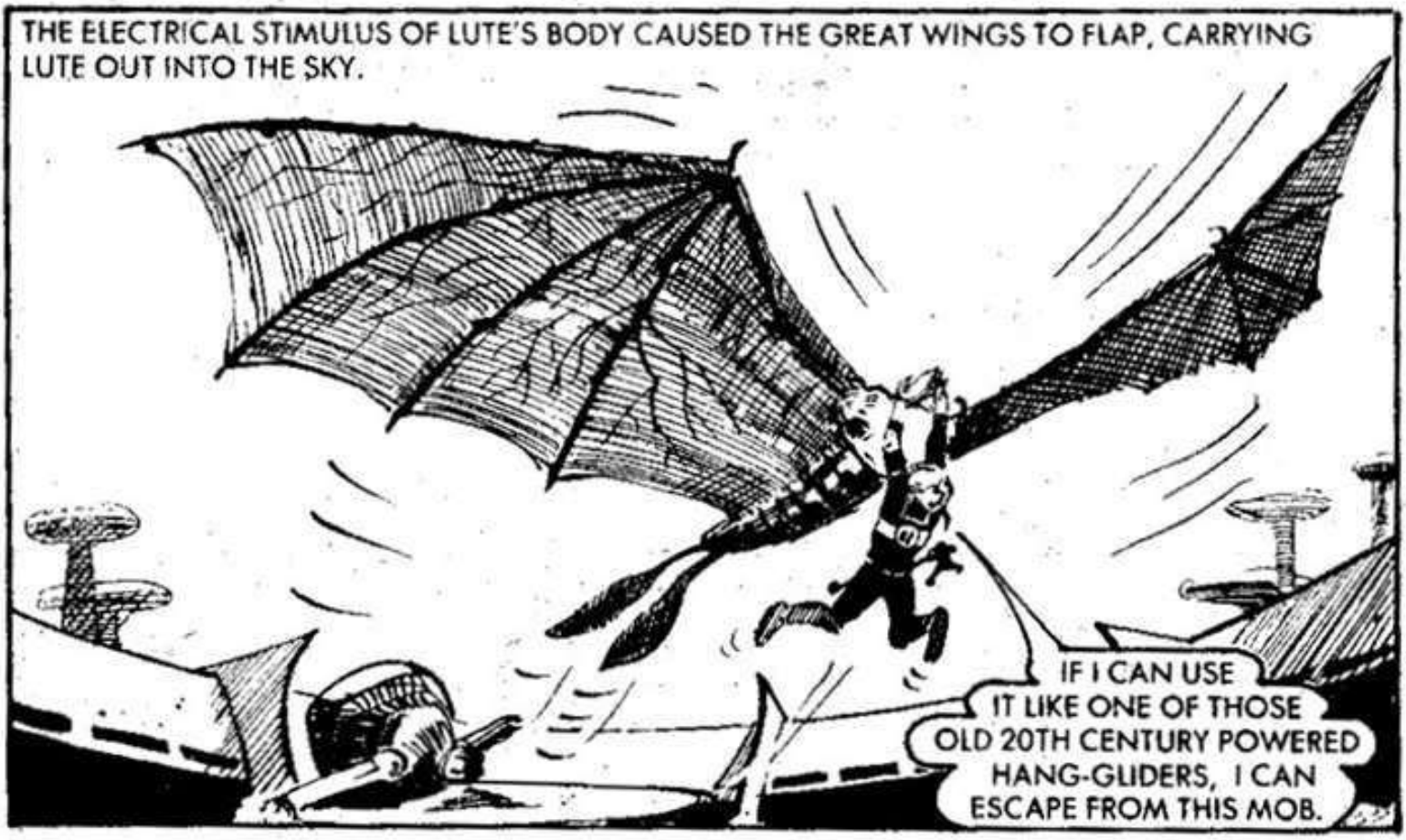

IT WAS! OUT OF RANGE OF LUTE'S LASER AXE IT AGAIN SPURTED HOT, BURNING ACID AT HIM. LUTE LEAPT AWAY, ROLLING ACROSS THE PLATFORM.
I'M GOING OVER THE EDGE!

LUTE RELEASED HIS GRIP, TO PLUMMET DOWN STRAIGHT ON TO THE BIOROBOT'S BACK.

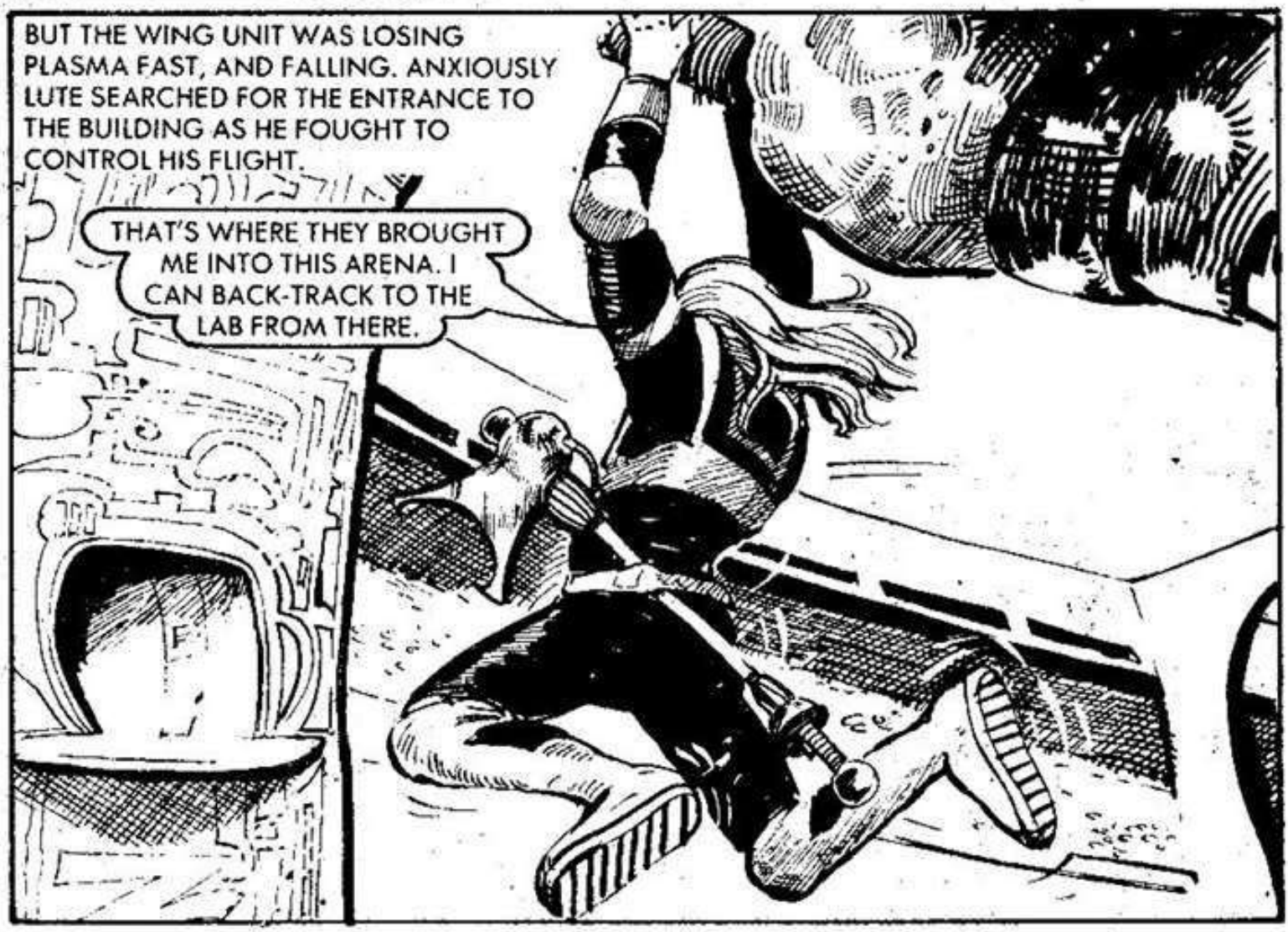

IT ROSE HIGH INTO THE AIR AND AS IT FLEW OVER THE PLATFORM LUTE STRUCK WITH HIS AXE . . .
THEY MADE A BAD MISTAKE WHEN THEY GAVE ME THIS LASER WEAPON. TAILS I WIN—HEAD YOU LOSE!

THE TIMING WAS PERFECT AND ALL FELL ON TO THE PLATFORM.
NOW, IF MY THEORY IS CORRECT, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO REACTIVATE THIS WING UNIT USING THE NATURAL ELECTRICAL ENERGY THAT WORKS MY NERVOUS SYSTEM.

IT'S WORKING! THE WING'S ARE STARTING TO MOVE!


THE ELECTRICAL STIMULUS OF LUTE'S BODY CAUSED THE GREAT WINGS TO FLAP, CARRYING LUTE OUT INTO THE SKY.
IF I CAN USE IT LIKE ONE OF THOSE OLD 20TH CENTURY POWERED HANG-GLIDERS, I CAN ESCAPE FROM THIS MOB.

THE HUMAN IS ESCAPING!
THIS IS NOT WHAT I PLANNED! HE MUST BE CAUGHT AND EXTERMINATED AT ONCE!
I'VE GOT TO GET TO THE LAB COMPLEX AND FIND ARCHEE. SPACE LAB CAN'T BE FAR AWAY NOW.

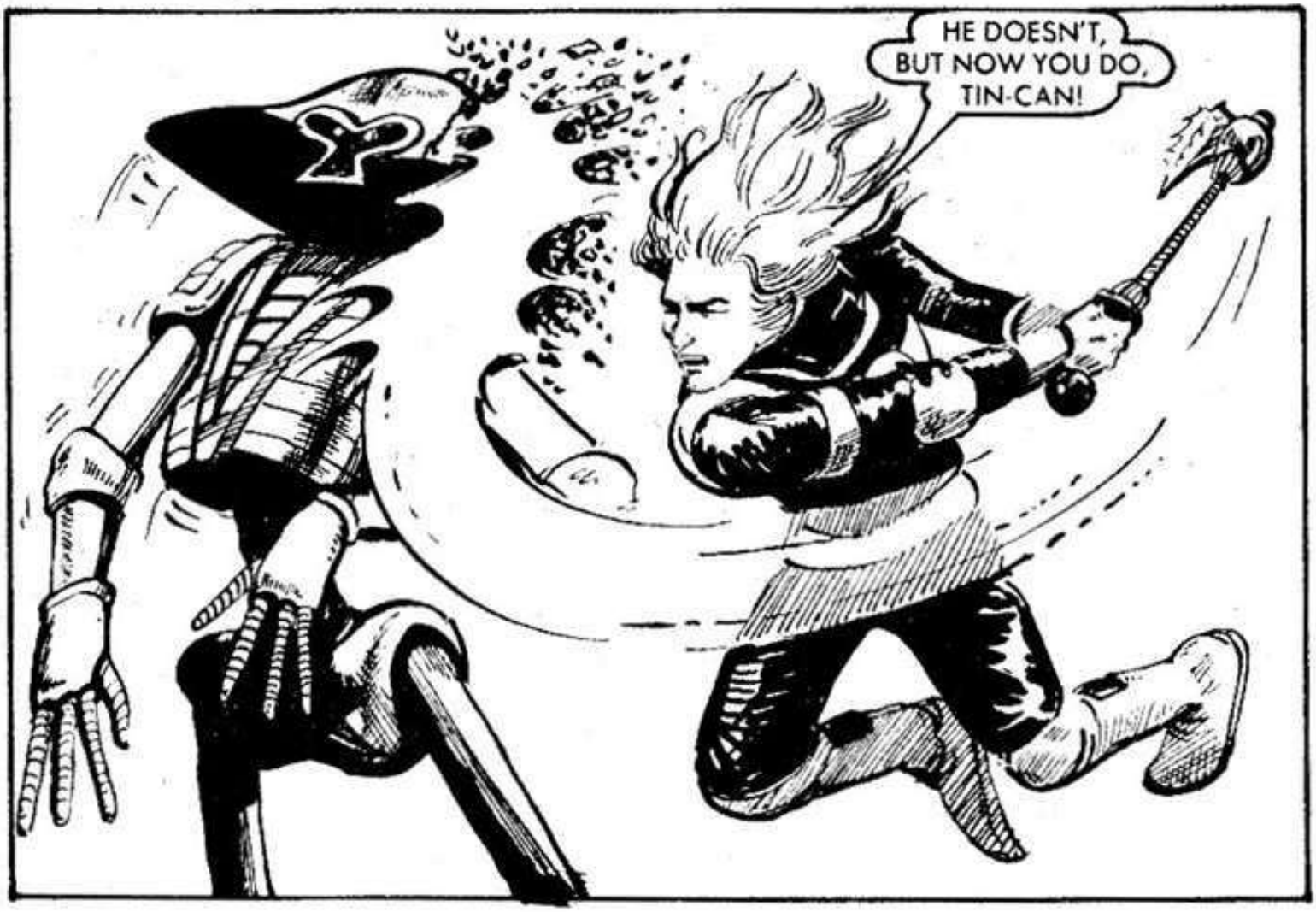

BUT THE WING UNIT WAS LOSING PLASMA FAST, AND FALLING. ANXIOUSLY LUTE SEARCHED FOR THE ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING AS HE FOUGHT TO CONTROL HIS FLIGHT.
THAT'S WHERE THEY BROUGHT ME INTO THIS ARENA. I CAN BACK-TRACK TO THE LAB FROM THERE.

MADE IT! I MUST GET ARCHEE AND GET OUT OF THIS PLACE BEFORE THEY FIND SOME OTHER WAY OF ENTERTAINING THEMSELVES.

LUTE RACED ON, SEARCHING THE SEEMINGLY DESERTED COMPLEX.
THEY MUST ALL BE AT THE ARENA—GETTING MAD BECAUSE THEIR TEAM LOST!

CAN'T BE FAR NOW. THIS IS THE GREAT HALL WHERE THEY BROUGHT OMEGA.

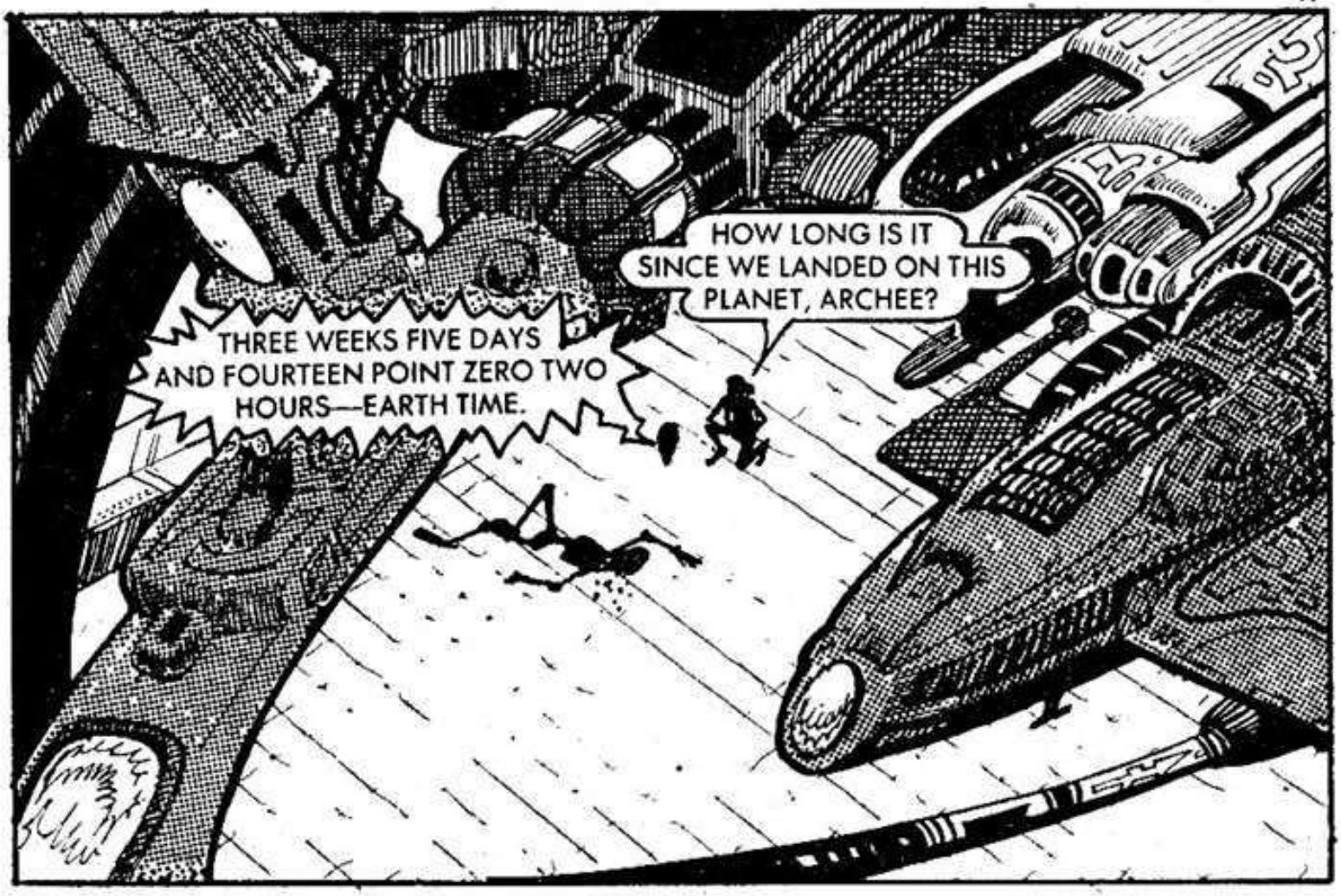
SUDDENLY LUTE HEARD ARCHEE'S ALARM CALL
IT'S ARCHEE! HE'S STILL LINKED INTO THAT COMPUTER. HE MUST HAVE SENSED ME AND IS WARNING ME ABOUT THAT MECHO.
TREEEP! PREEEP!
WHAT'S WRONG? DO YOU HAVE A MALFUNCTION?

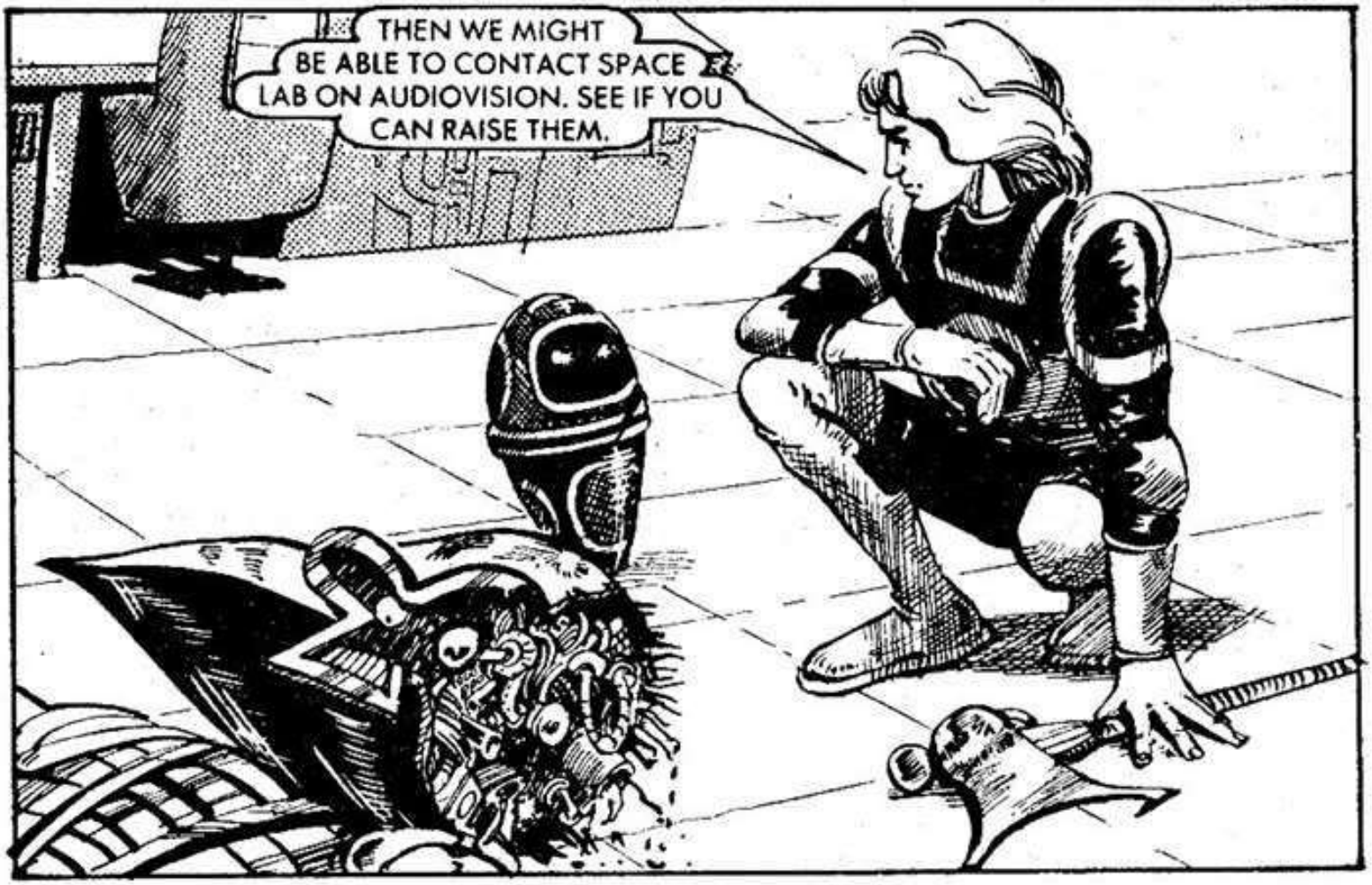

HE DOESN'T, BUT NOW YOU DO, TIN-CAN!

RIGHT, ARCHEE, START TALKING! WHY DID YOU GIVE THEM ALL THE DATA ON OMEGA?
THEY WOULD HAVE GOT IT ANYWAY. BUT I DIDN'T TELL THEM THE SYSTEM WORKS FOR ONLY A SMALL MASS.

I TOLD THEM THEY COULD MAKE A LARGE OMEGA DEVICE AND THIS THEY HAVE DONE! THEY WILL TEST IT FORTY-ONE HOURS FROM NOW AND DESTROY THEMSELVES. AREN'T I CLEVER?

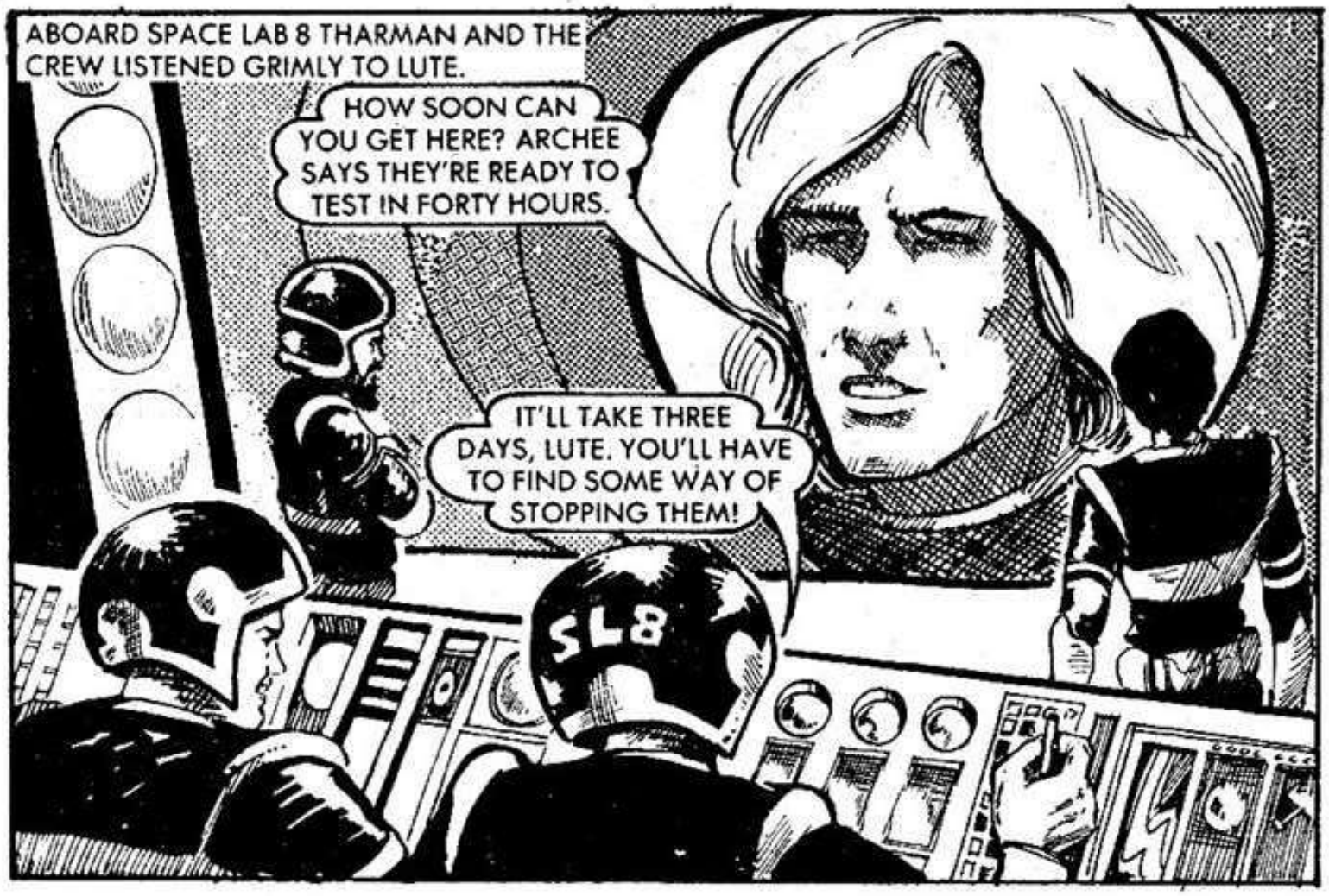
YOU SMUG LITTLE TWERP! IT ALSO MEANS WE GET BLOWN UP WITH THEM! HAVE YOU AT LEAST STILL BEEN SENDING THE MAYDAY BEACON CALL ALL THIS TIME?
YES.

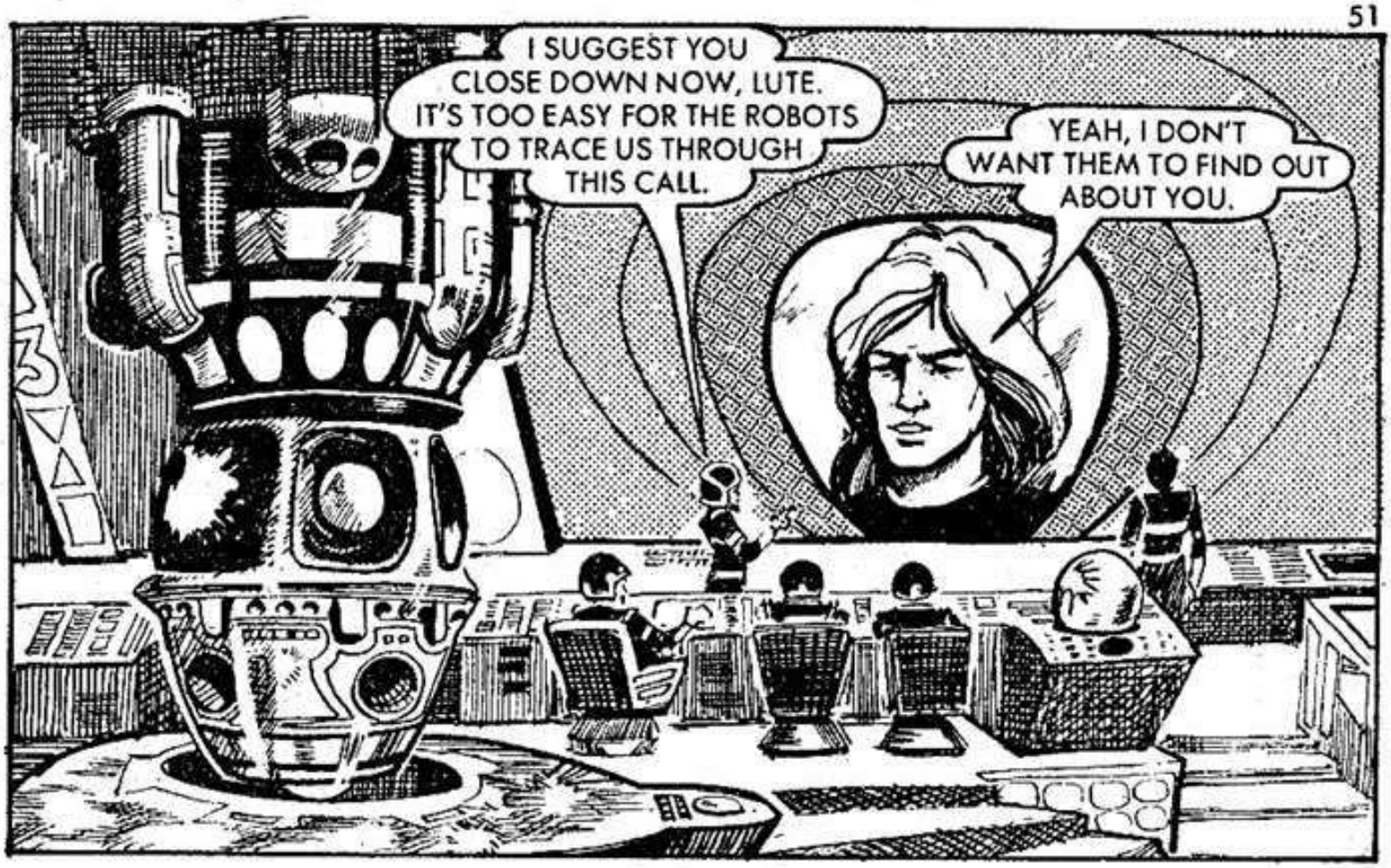

HOW LONG IS IT SINCE WE LANDED ON THIS PLANET, ARCHEE?
THREE WEEKS FIVE DAYS AND FOURTEEN POINT ZERO TWO HOURS—EARTH TIME.


THEN WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO CONTACT SPACE LAB ON AUDIOVISION. SEE IF YOU CAN RAISE THEM.

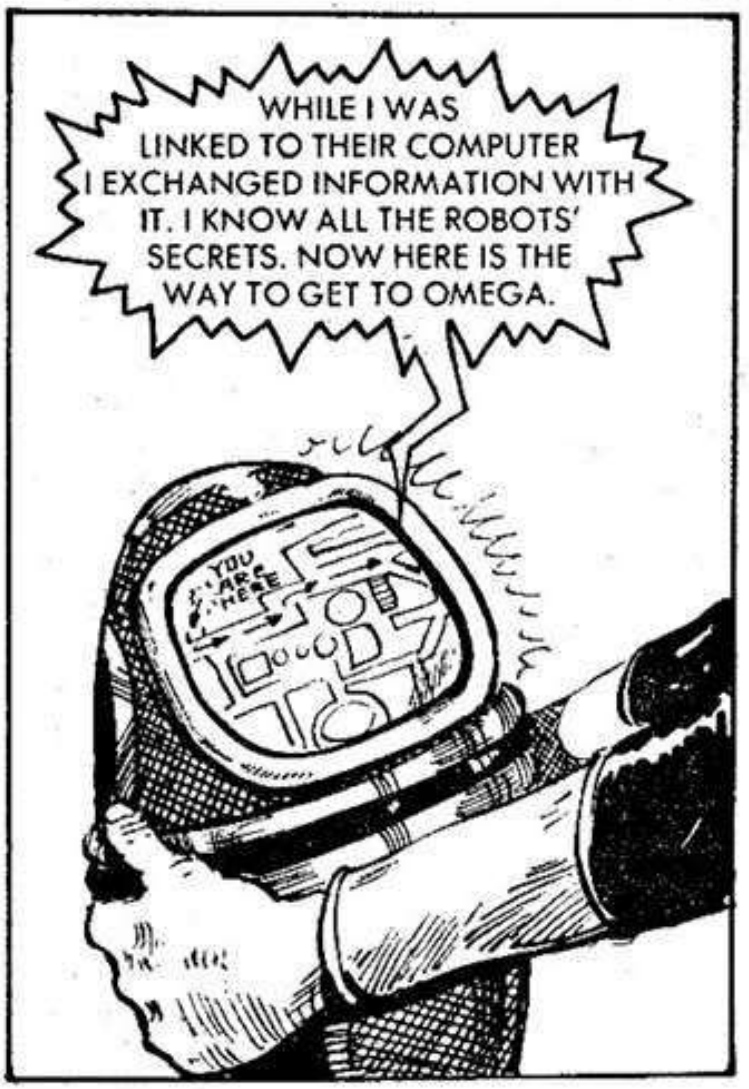
ARCHEE'S SCREEN LIT UP TO SHOW THE WELCOME SIGHT OF SPACE LAB 8.
LUTE! IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU! WHAT'S HAPPENED?

IT'S A LONG STORY. IT STARTED WITH A SPACE ROCK AND SEEMS TO BE FINISHING WITH A PACK OF LUTE-THIRSTY ROBOTS.


ABOARD SPACE LAB 8 THARMAN AND THE CREW LISTENED GRIMLY TO LUTE.
HOW SOON CAN YOU GET HERE? ARCHEE SAYS THEY'RE READY TO TEST IN FORTY HOURS.
IT'LL TAKE THREE DAYS, LUTE. YOU'LL HAVE TO FIND SOME WAY OF STOPPING THEM!
SL8

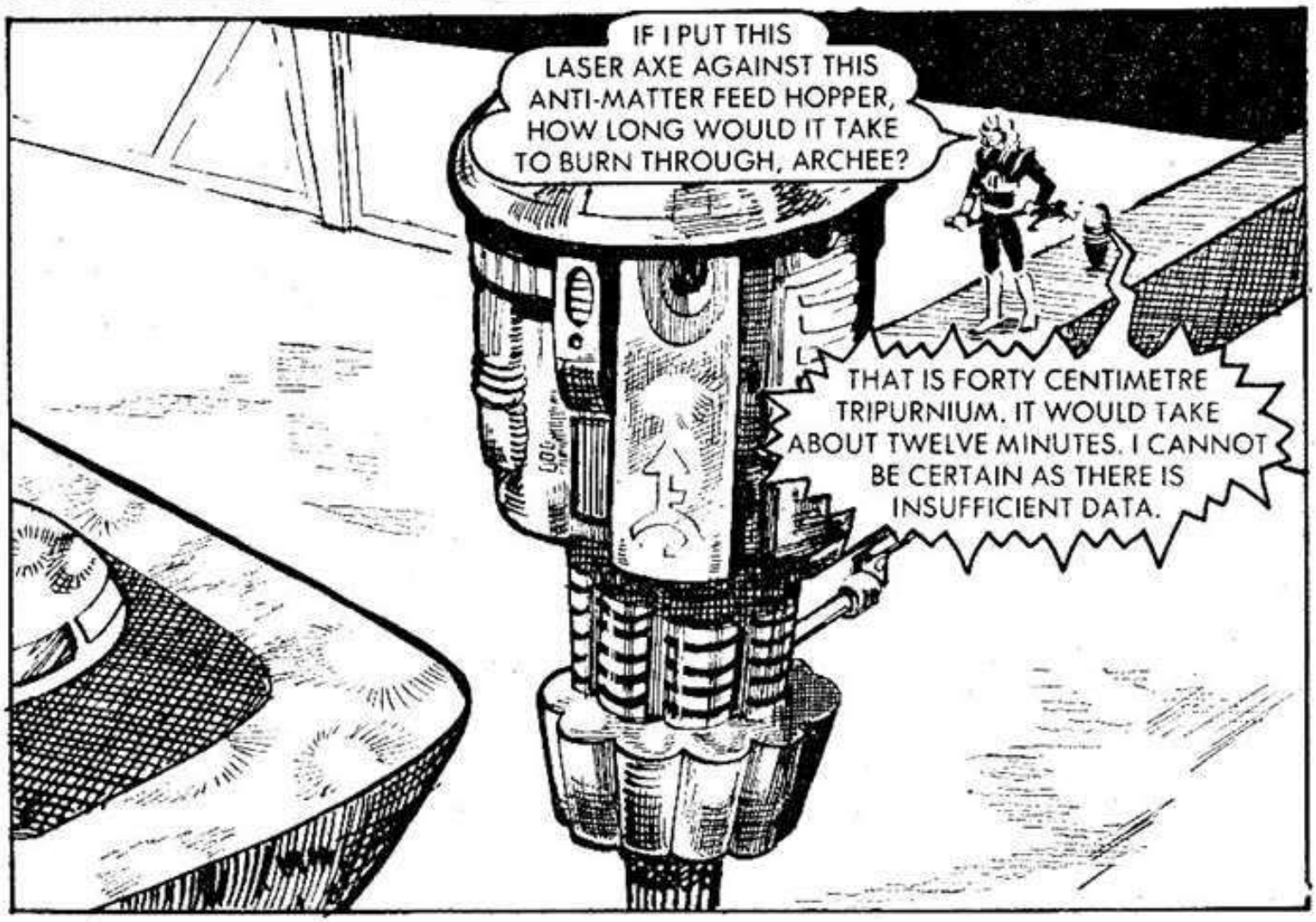

I SUGGEST YOU CLOSE DOWN NOW, LUTE. IT'S TOO EASY FOR THE ROBOTS TO TRACE US THROUGH THIS CALL.
YEAH, I DON'T WANT THEM TO FIND OUT ABOUT YOU.

BUT WHERE DO I START LOOKING FOR THEIR OMEGA MACHINE? ANY IDEAS, ARCHEE?
OH YES! I KNOW WHERE IT IS. I KNOW EVERYTHING.

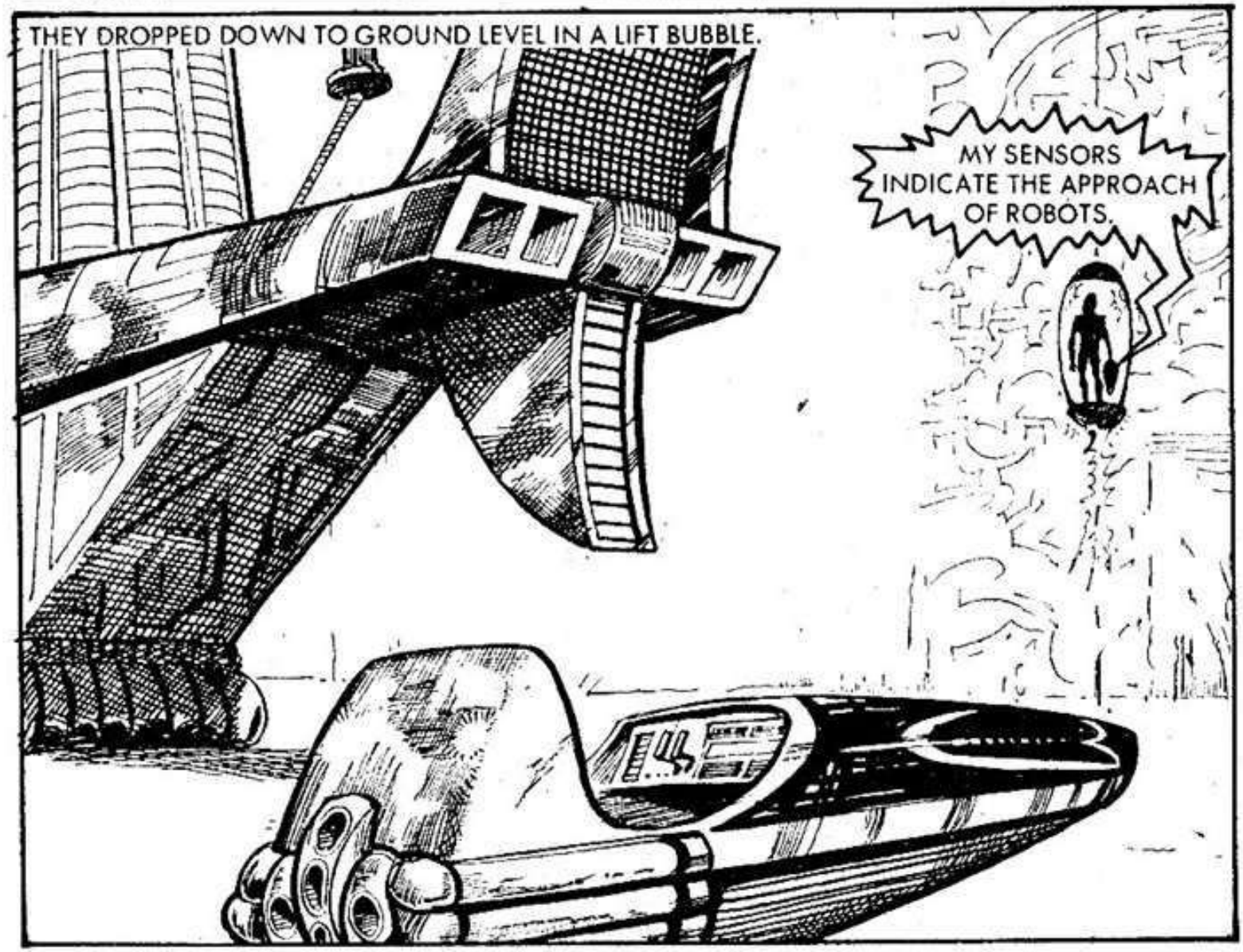

WHILE I WAS LINKED TO THEIR COMPUTER I EXCHANGED INFORMATION WITH IT. I KNOW ALL THE ROBOTS' SECRETS. NOW HERE IS THE WAY TO GET TO OMEGA.
YOU ARE HERE

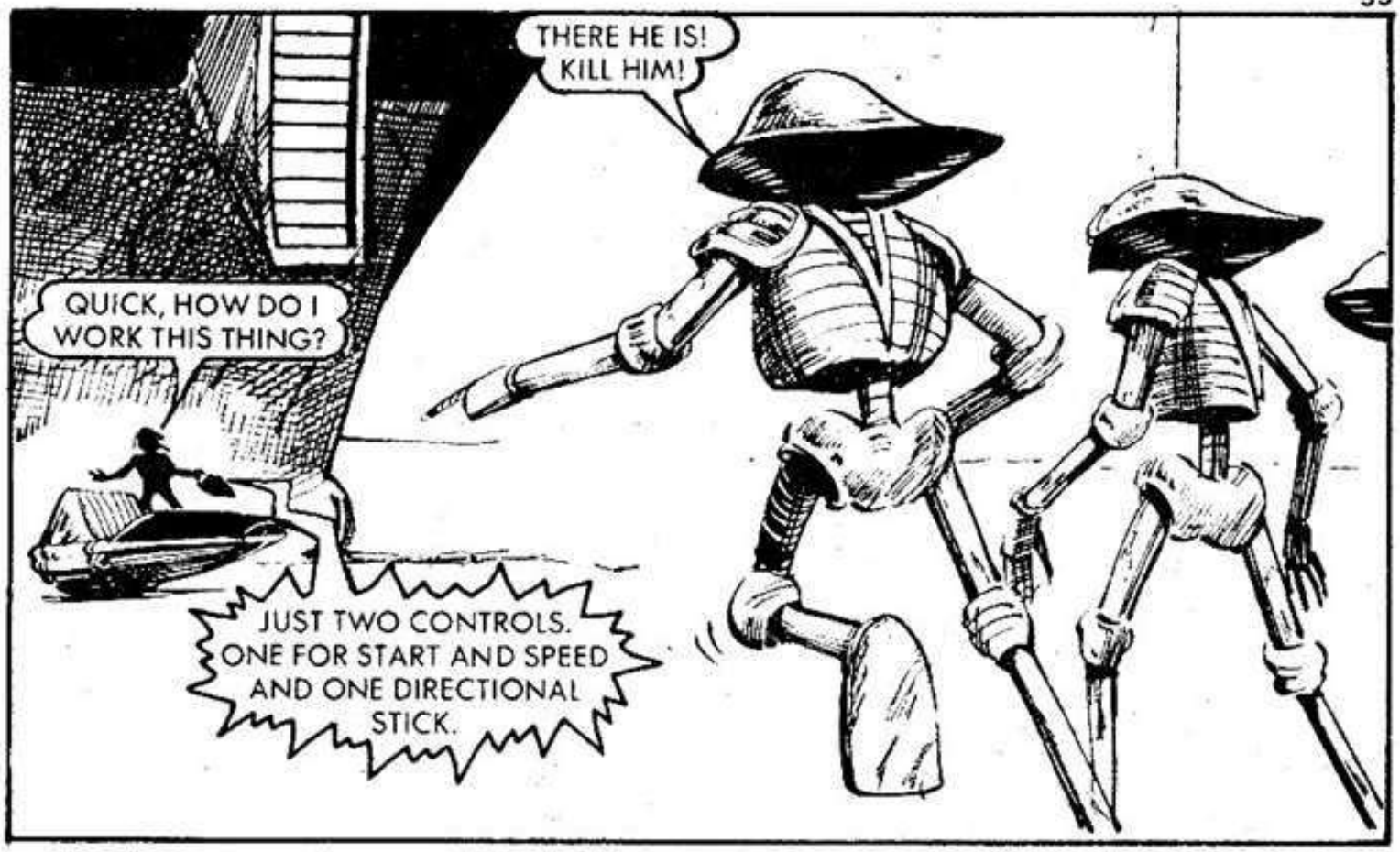
LUTE FOLLOWED ARCHEE'S MAP AND HALTED, AMAZED AT THE SIGHT BEFORE HIM.
JUST LOOK AT THE SIZE OF IT! HOW ON EARTH DID THEY BUILD IT SO QUICKLY?
THEY'RE ROBOTS. THEY DON'T HAVE TO STOP FOR A REST. AS SOON AS THEY HAVE FILLED THE ANTI-MATTER TANKS THEY'LL BE READY.

IF I CAN FIND A WAY OF RELEASING THE ANTI-MATTER WE'RE IN BUSINESS.
ANTI-MATTER WAS THE FUEL OF FORCE-FIELDS. IT WAS THE MAN-MADE ' MIRROR IMAGE ' OF NATURAL ATOMS FROM WHICH IT HAD TO BE KEPT SEPARATED MAGNETICALLY. ANY CONTACT BETWEEN ANTI-MATTER AND NATURAL MATTER RESULTED IN A MOLECULAR DISRUPTION - A BIG BANG!

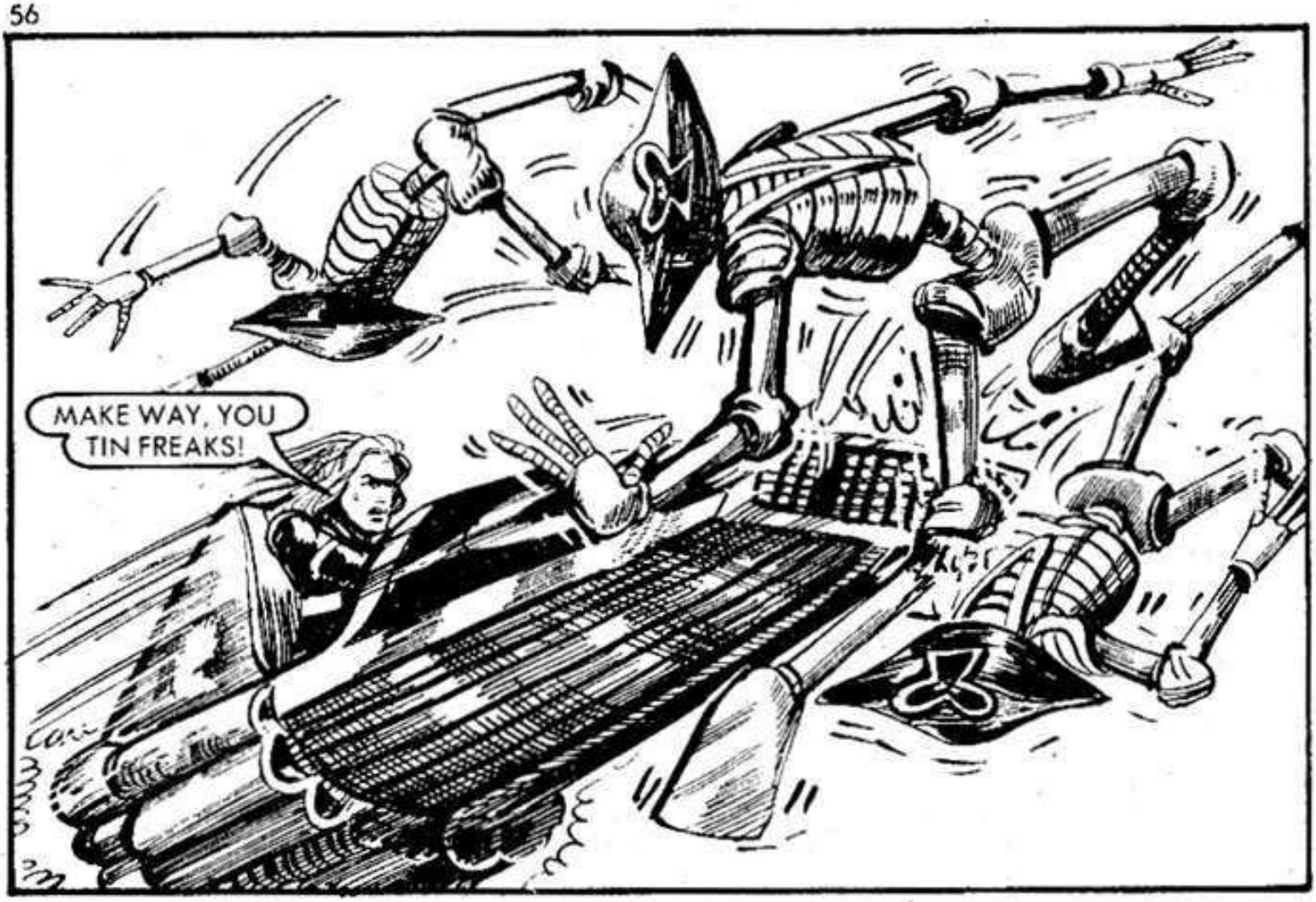

IF I PUT THIS LASER AXE AGAINST THIS ANTI-MATTER FEED HOPPER, HOW LONG WOULD IT TAKE TO BURN THROUGH, ARCHEE?
THAT IS FORTY CENTIMETRE TRIPURNIUM. IT WOULD TAKE ABOUT TWELVE MINUTES. I CANNOT BE CERTAIN AS THERE IS INSUFFICIENT DATA.

THEN WE'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE IN A HURRY. THERE'S A GRAVITY SLED DOWN THERE WE CAN USE.

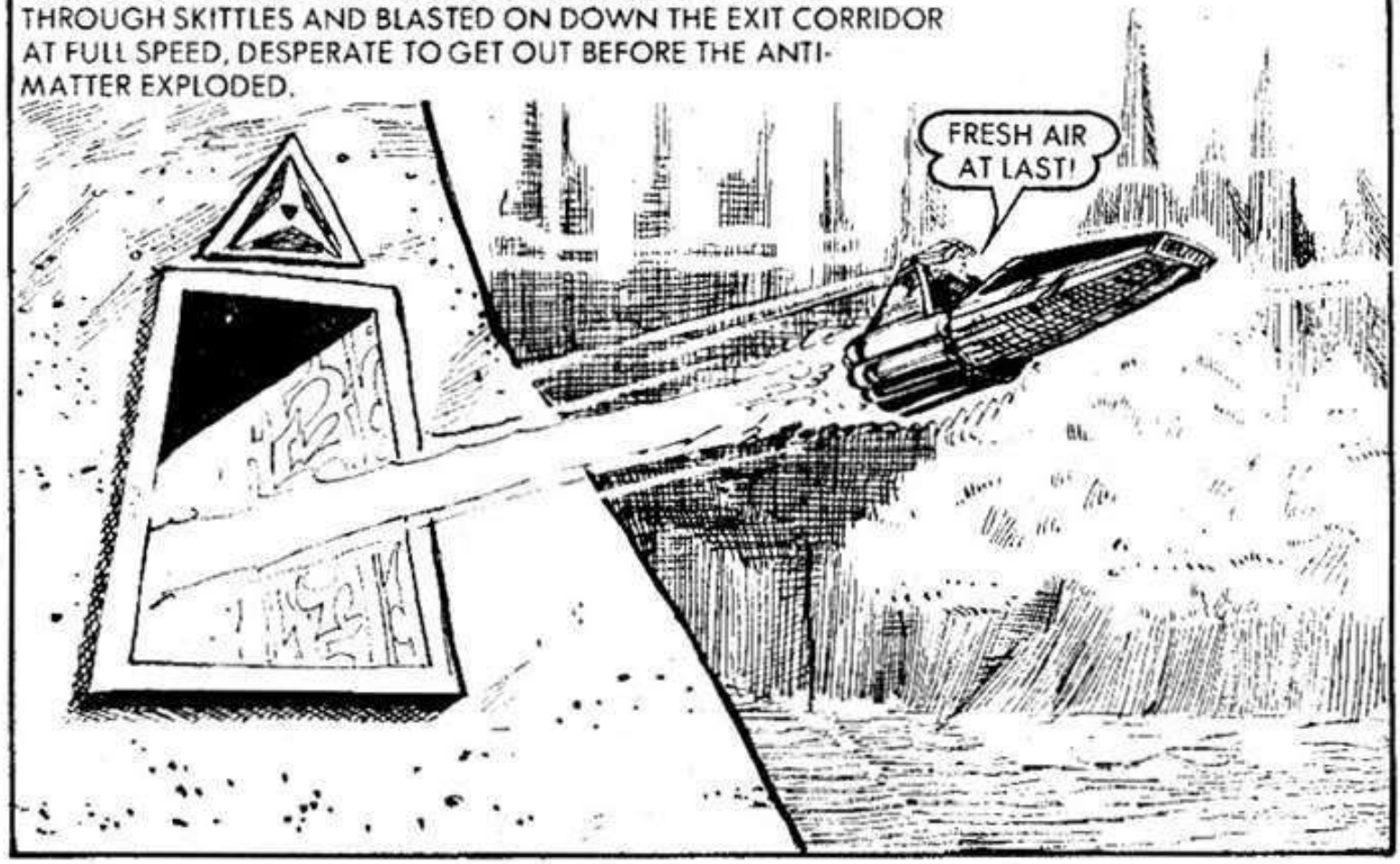

THEY DROPPED DOWN TO GROUND LEVEL IN A LIFT BUBBLE.
MY SENSORS INDICATE THE APPROACH OF ROBOTS.

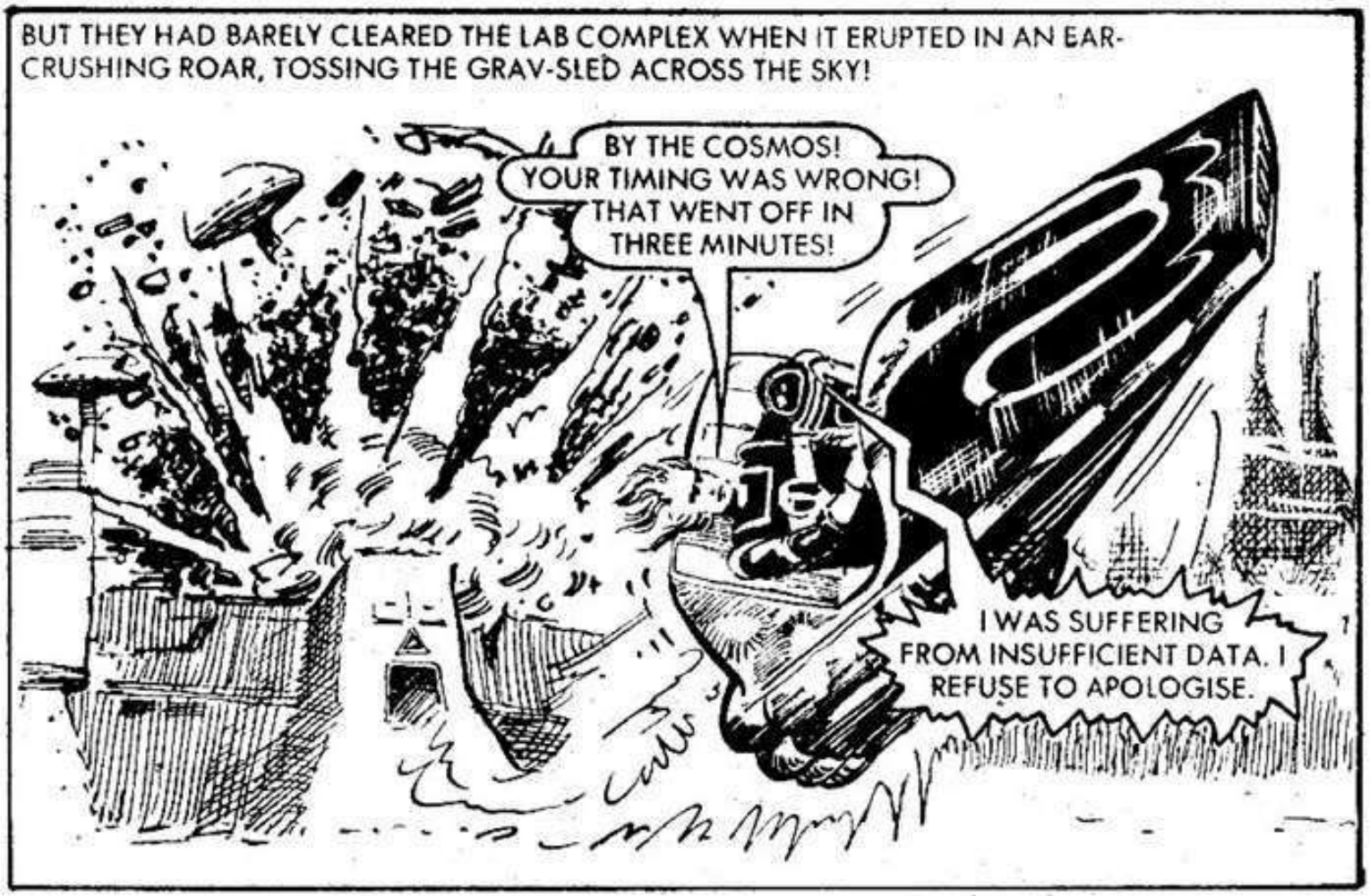

THERE HE IS! KILL HIM!
QUICK, HOW DO I WORK THIS THING?
JUST TWO CONTROLS. ONE FOR START AND SPEED AND ONE DIRECTIONAL STICK.

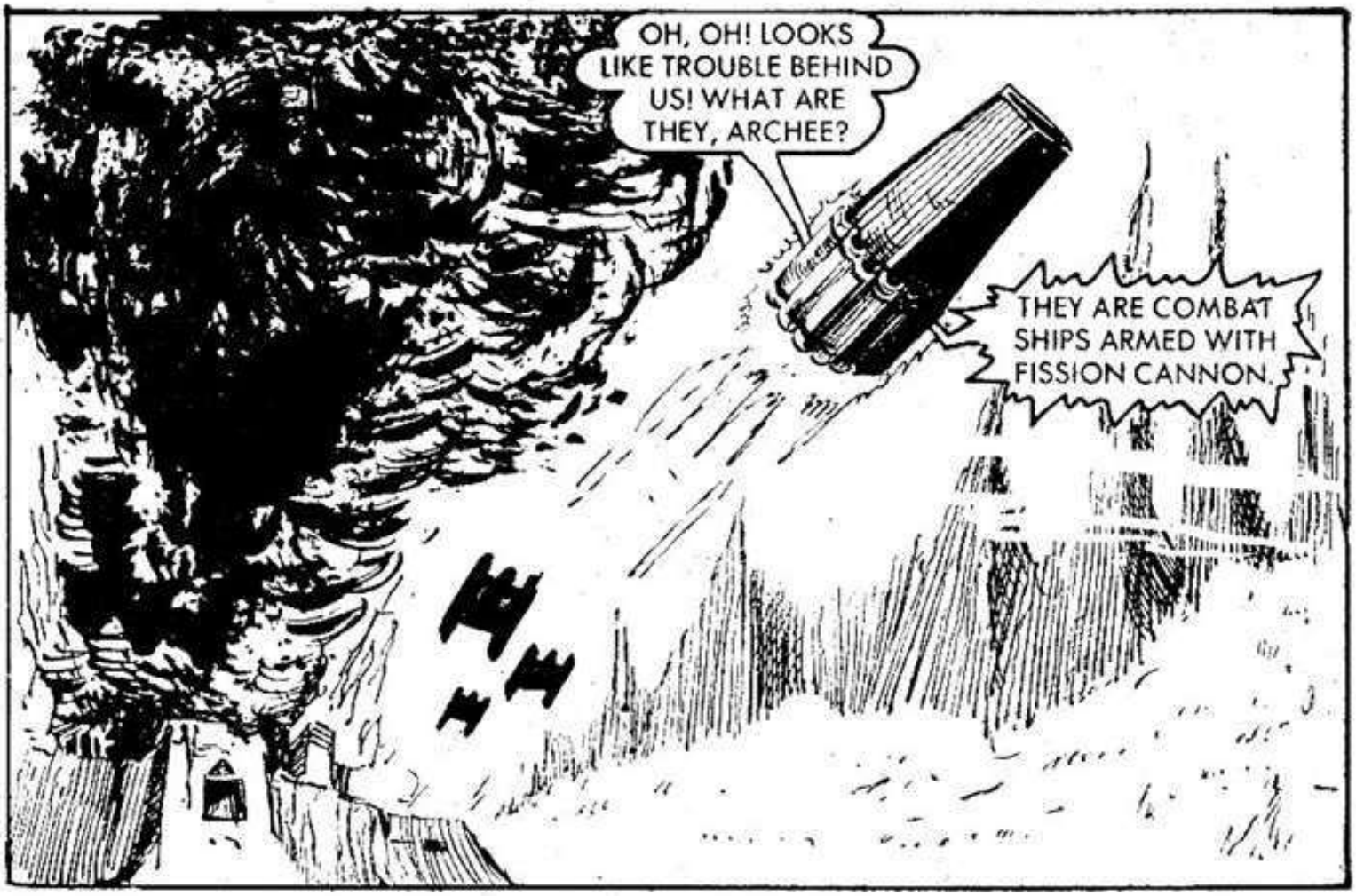
GOT IT! NOW WHERE'S THE WAY OUT OF HERE?
BEHIND THEM!
THEN HOLD ON TO YOUR TRANSISTORS, ARCHEE. HERE WE GO!



LUTE BURST THROUGH THE ROBOTS LIKE A BOWLING BALL THROUGH SKITTLES AND BLASTED ON DOWN THE EXIT CORRIDOR AT FULL SPEED, DESPERATE TO GET OUT BEFORE THE ANTI-MATTER EXPLODED.

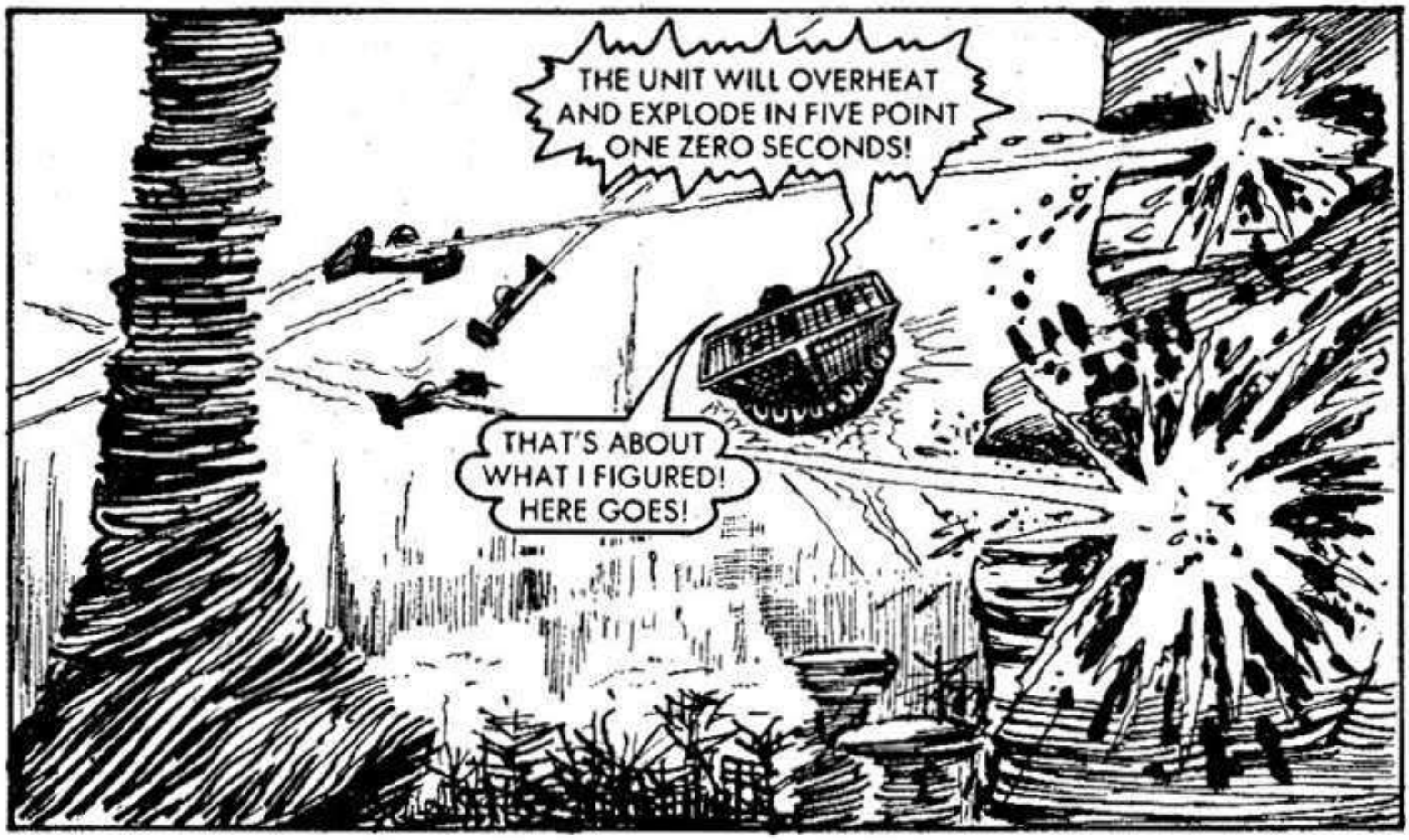



BUT THEY HAD BARELY CLEARED THE LAB COMPLEX WHEN IT ERUPTED IN AN EAR-CRUSHING ROAR, TOSSING THE GRAV-SLED ACROSS THE SKY!
BY THE COSMOS! YOUR TIMING WAS WRONG! THAT WENT OFF IN THREE MINUTES!
I WAS SUFFERING FROM INSUFFICIENT DATA. I REFUSE TO APOLOGISE.


OH, OH! LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE BEHIND US! WHAT ARE THEY, ARCHEE?
THEY ARE COMBAT SHIPS ARMED WITH FISSION CANNON.

HOW LONG BEFORE THEY CATCH US?
APPROXIMATELY THREE MINUTES.

LUTE LEANED FORWARD, PRISING OPEN AN INSPECTION PANEL FROM THE MOTOR UNIT.
IT LOOKS PRETTY STRAIGHT FORWARD. IF I BEND THIS NEUTRON INDUCTION FEED AGAINST THE ELECTRON COIL,WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN, ARCHEE?


THE UNIT WILL OVERHEAT AND EXPLODE IN FIVE POINT ONE ZERO SECONDS!
THAT'S ABOUT WHAT I FIGURED! HERE GOES!

LUTE BENT THE NEUTRON FEED AGAINST THE COIL AND RACED FOR THE COVER OF SOME ROCKS . . .
THESE ROCKS SHOULD HIDE US FROM THEIR DIRECTORS LONG ENOUGH!

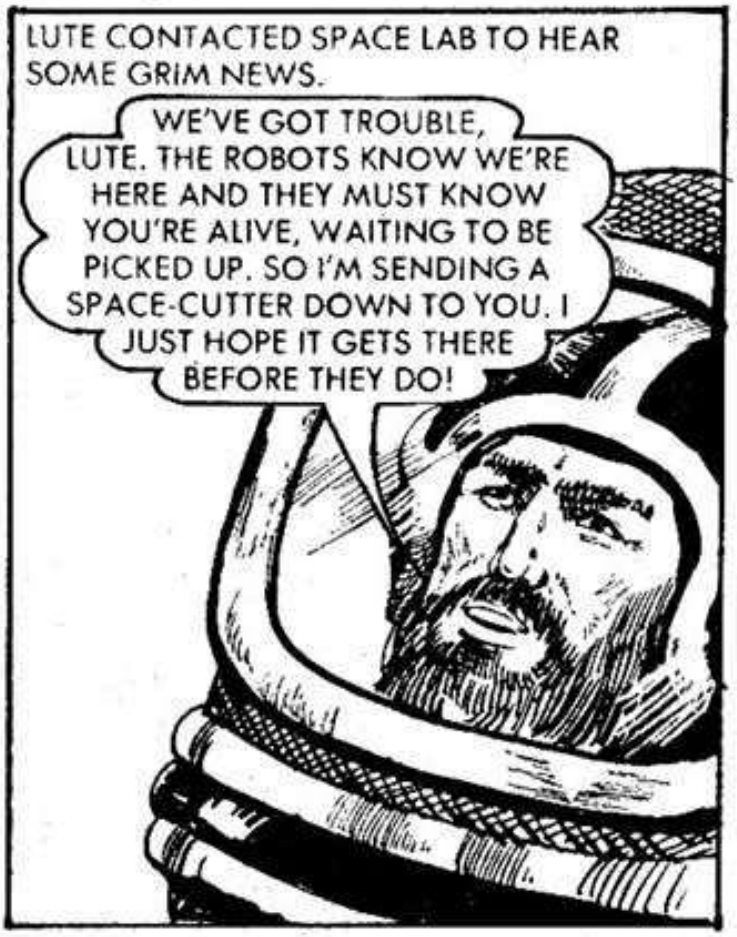
WITH THE ROCKS BETWEEN THEM AND THEIR PURSUERS, LUTE GRABBED ARCHEE AND LEAPT FROM THE SLED.
C'MON, ARCHEE, THIS IS WHERE WE GET OFF!

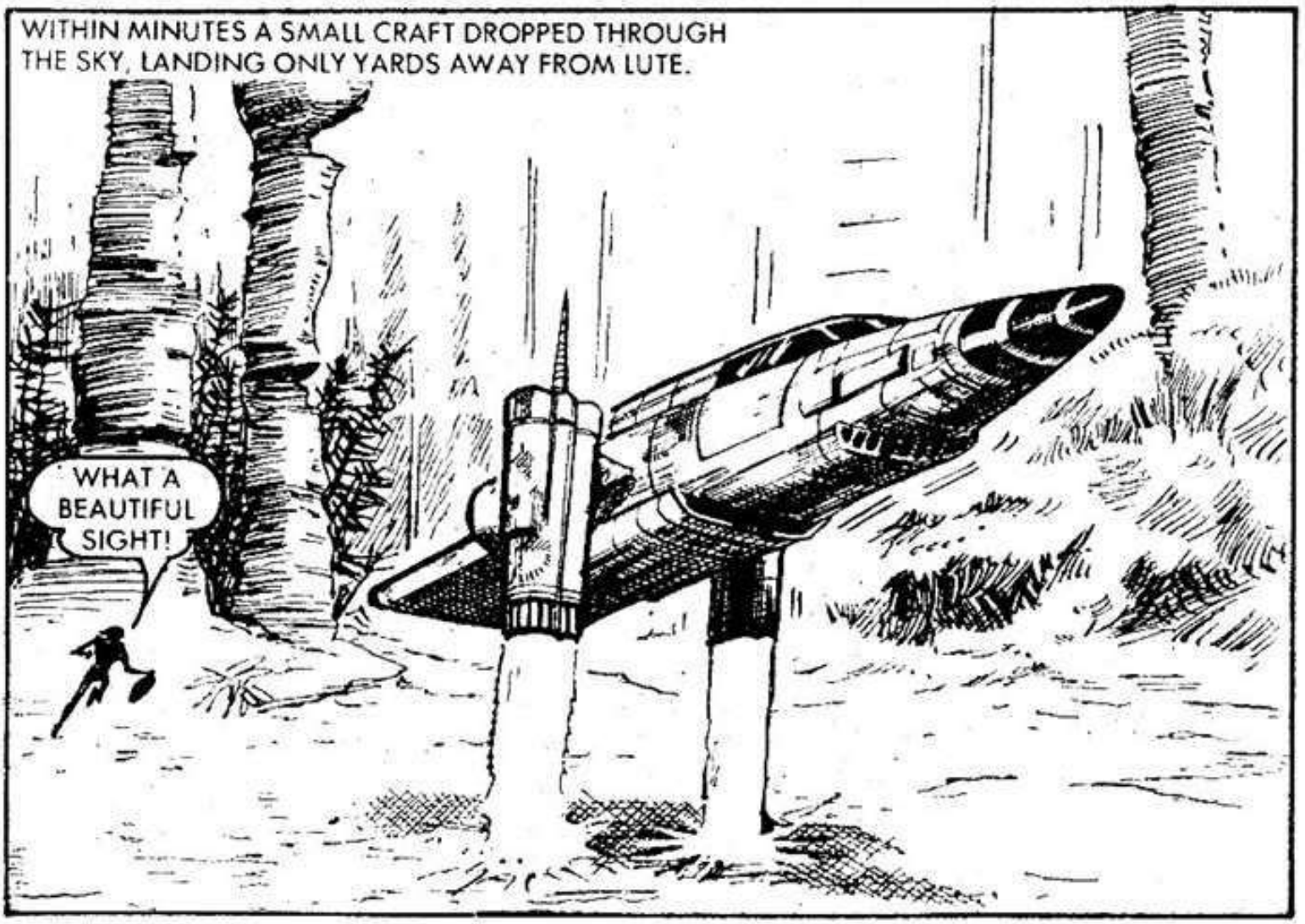
THE PURSUING ROBOTS STARED AS THE SLED DISINTEGRATED AHEAD OF THEM.
HE HAS ATOMISED!
THE SLED MUST HAVE MALFUNCTIONED. ABORT PURSUIT AND RETURN TO BASE.

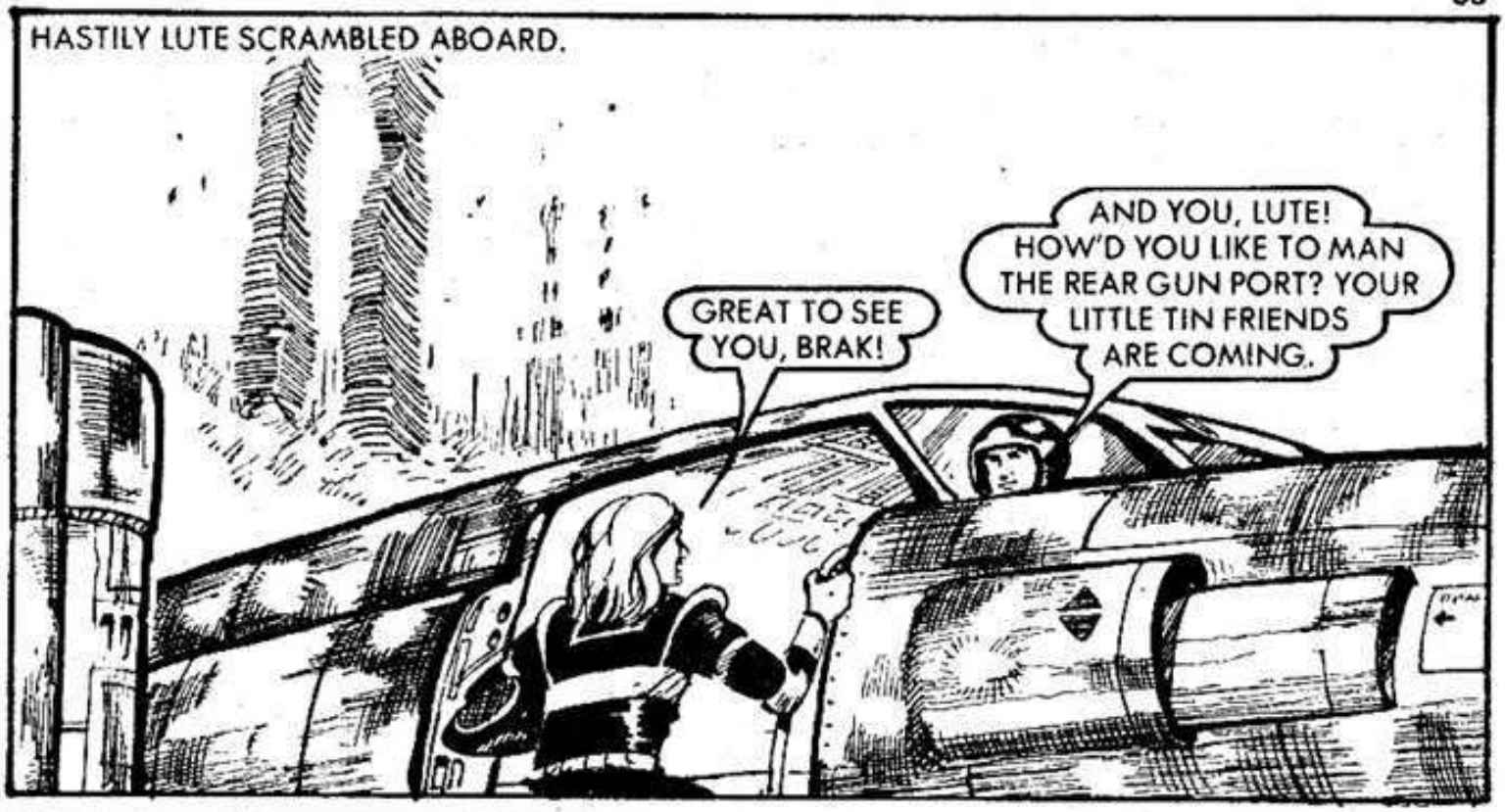
FROM THE SMALL LAKE INTO WHICH HE HAD JUMPED, LUTE WATCHED THEM DEPART . . .
JUPITER! THEY FELL FOR IT!

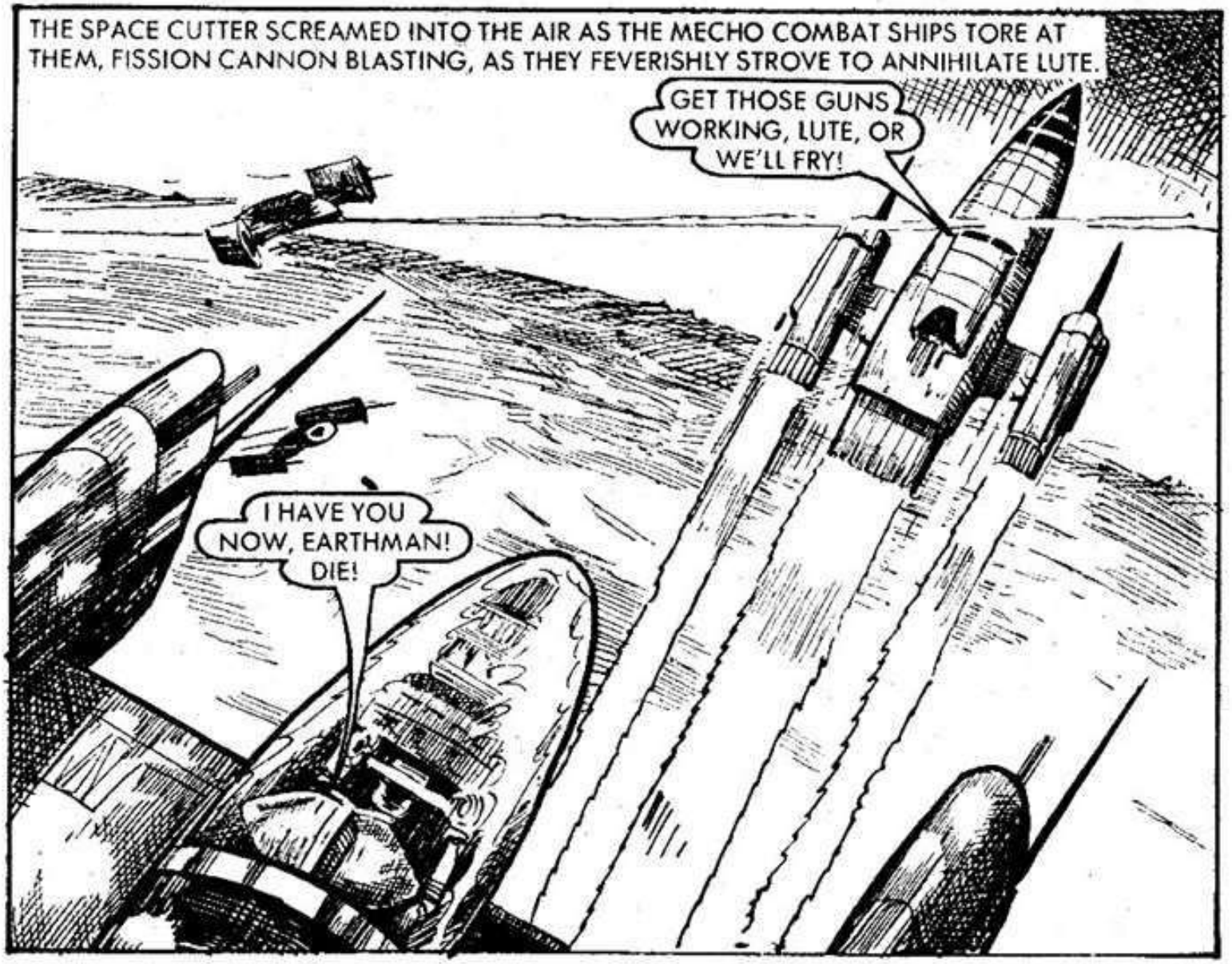
THE HEADY PERFUME OF NEARBY FLOWERS PLEASANTLY FILLED THE AIR AS THE EXHAUSTED LUTE FELL INTO A DEEP SLEEP. BUT IT SEEMED ONLY A MOMENT BEFORE HE STRUGGLED AWAKE TO THE SOUND OF ARCHEE'S REPEATED ALARM CALL.

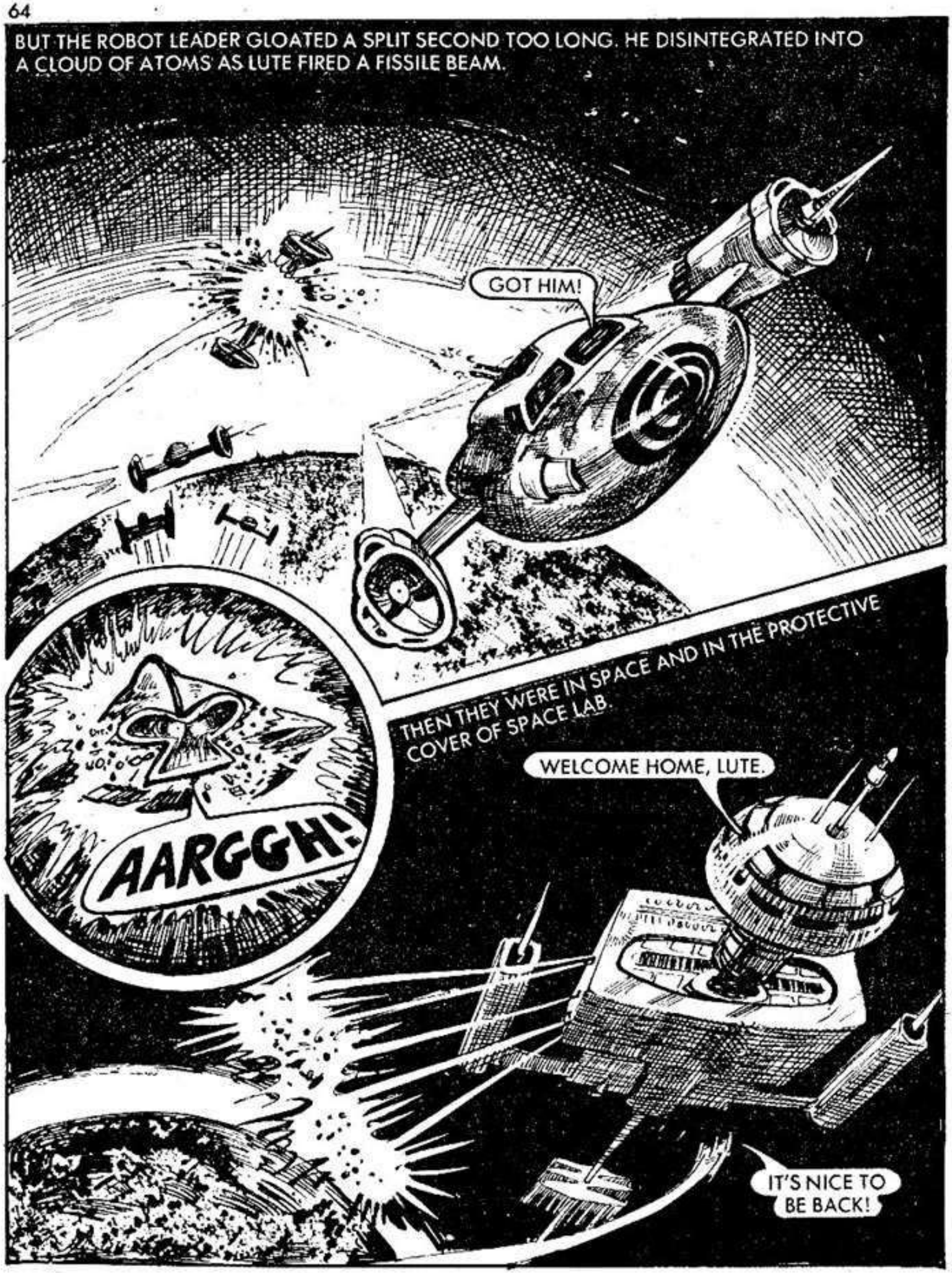
WHY DIDN'T YOU WAKE ME!
I HAVE TRIED, BUT THE SCENT FROM THOSE FLOWERS APPEARS TO HAVE A SLEEP-INDUCING EFFECT!


LUTE CONTACTED SPACE LAB TO HEAR SOME GRIM NEWS.
WE'VE GOT TROUBLE, LUTE. THE ROBOTS KNOW WE'RE HERE AND THEY MUST KNOW YOU'RE ALIVE, WAITING TO BE PICKED UP. SO I'M SENDING A SPACE-CUTTER DOWN TO YOU. I JUST HOPE IT GETS THERE BEFORE THEY DO!

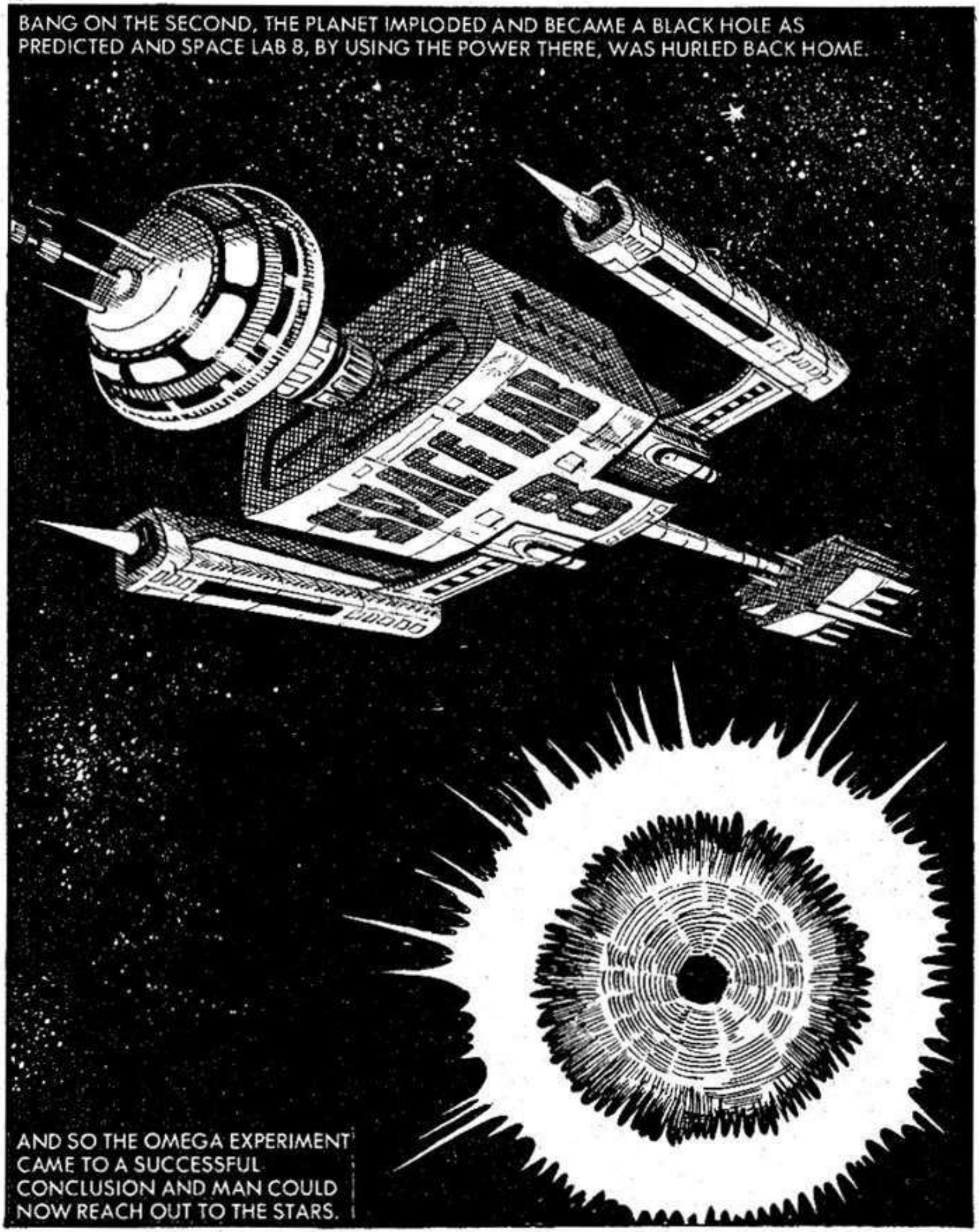

WITHIN MINUTES A SMALL CRAFT DROPPED THROUGH THE SKY, LANDING ONLY YARDS AWAY FROM LUTE.
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT!


HASTILY LUTE SCRAMBLED ABOARD.
GREAT TO SEE YOU, BRAK!
AND YOU, LUTE! HOW'D YOU LIKE TO MAN THE REAR GUN PORT? YOUR LITTLE TIN FRIENDS ARE COMING.


THE SPACE CUTTER SCREAMED INTO THE AIR AS THE MECHO COMBAT SHIPS TORE AT THEM, FISSION CANNON BLASTING, AS THEY FEVERISHLY STROVE TO ANNIHILATE LUTE.
GET THOSE GUNS WORKING, LUTE, OR WE'LL FRY!
I HAVE YOU NOW, EARTHMAN! DIE!


BUT THE ROBOT LEADER GLOATED A SPLIT SECOND TOO LONG. HE DISINTEGRATED INTO A CLOUD OF ATOMS AS LUTE FIRED A FISSILE BEAM.
GOT HIM!
AARGGH!
THEN THEY WERE IN SPACE AND IN THE PROTECTIVE COVER OF SPACE LAB.
WELCOME HOME, LUTE.
IT'S NICE TO BE BACK!

THERE'S NO POINT HANGING AROUND HERE. WE MIGHT AS WELL HEAD FOR EARTH CONTROL. IT'S GOING TO BE TWO LONG MONTHS OF TRAVELLING.
YOU'RE WRONG. I CALCULATE THAT WE CAN GET BACK TO EARTH ORBIT IN TWO HOURS FOUR POINT THREE MINUTES!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THEY BUILT TWO OMEGAS AND THE SECOND ONE IS DESIGNATED FOR TESTING IN TWO HOURS TIME. IT WILL CERTAINLY CREATE A BLACK HOLE AND WE CAN USE IT TO RETURN HOME!
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME THIS BEFORE?
THERE WAS NO NEED. I HAD SUFFICIENT DATA TO MAKE A CORRECT DECISION!



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STARBLAZERS IN THE CONQUEST OF SPACE (1)

The STARBLAZING age began on October 4th 1957 when the Russians launched Sputnik 1, the first satellite to orbit Earth. Sputnik 2 followed on 3rd November 1957. Not only did this Sputnik weigh over 1000 pounds, it contained the first living creature to orbit Earth . . . a dog called Laika.